

What should young workers do if they have an accident?

Young workers are often unaware of what to do if they have an accident and of what rights they have under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the *Workers Compensation Act*. All workers, including young and part-time workers, are entitled to workers' compensation benefits and services in the event of a work injury or illness. These benefits can include compensation for lost wages and medical costs for such services as hospital care, health care providers, medication, and surgery.

If injured, young workers should follow these three important steps, even if they think the injury is minor:

1. Report any injury to their supervisor or first aid attendant immediately.
2. Get medical treatment, if required. A doctor or other health care professional can best determine how to treat an injury.
3. Follow up with the employer to make sure a Report of Injury Form 7 is sent to the WCB if medical treatment is required or if the worker is unable to perform his or her work because of the injury.

Who is responsible for young workers' safety?

The safety of young workers is everyone's job. Everyone has a part to play – unions, employers, supervisors, co-workers, parents, educators, the WCB, the community at large, and young workers themselves. Each of these groups of

people has a distinct and direct role to play.

- **Unions:** Unions can help to keep youth safe on the job by ensuring young workers' rights are upheld in the workplace.
- **Employers:** Employers are ultimately responsible for safety in their workplace. They are required to meet all health and safety requirements, to have proper supervision in place, and to ensure young workers have the necessary training and equipment to do their jobs safely.
- **Supervisors:** Supervisors are usually responsible for providing safety training. They also are the ones who give ongoing guidance and supervision on the job.
- **Co-workers:** Co-workers should lead by example and follow safe work procedures. They should not put young workers at risk by asking them to do tasks for which they have not received safety training.
- **Parents:** As the main providers of care, parents need to talk to their children about health and safety at their jobs, as they would discuss other health and safety concerns. Parents should never assume that their children are safe on the job. Parents should encourage young workers to ask questions and seek help when they are uncertain about safe work activities or practices.
- **Educators:** Educators are in a unique position to offer guidance to students concerning health and safety from an early age. Instructional materials for kindergarten to grade 12 are available from the WCB. These materials are recommended by the Ministry of Education and can be integrated into many areas of study.
- **Other community members:** Workplace safety concerns us all. Even if we are not directly involved in the workplace or with young people in other areas, we all have a

responsibility to raise awareness about preventing workplace accidents by fostering a culture where young worker safety is a high priority.

- **Young workers:** Young workers need to work safely. To do this, they need to know the safety procedures for their jobs, and they need to be trained to follow them. If they aren't given training or instructions, they need to ask. They must follow the procedures and should encourage others to do so.

What role does the WCB play in young worker safety?

The WCB is responsible for promoting health and safety in the workplace. The first priority of the WCB is to prevent on-the-job injury and disease. WCB officers investigate serious workplace accidents; work with employers, supervisors, and workers to help them comply with regulations for health and safety in the workplace; and inspect worksites to make sure they comply with WCB requirements.

Since 1989, young workers have been a focus of the WCB's injury prevention efforts. The following list describes some of the WCB prevention initiatives and resources that provide young workers, employers, educators, and the public with information about keeping young workers healthy and safe on the job.

Prevention Programs and Initiatives

- **Student WorkSafe:** This safety curriculum is designed for teachers delivering Career and Personal Planning, and is accredited by the Ministry of Education as a recommended resource for Kindergarten to Grade 12. The pro-

gram materials include age-appropriate scenarios and activities that help students develop a strong sense of safety in their activities at school, home or work. An up-to-date version of the curriculum is available on-line at <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources-Educators.asp>.

- **Young Worker Injury Prevention Presentations:** Throughout the year, injured young workers are available to speak to high school students, industry associations, labour groups, workers and community groups across the province. Prevention officers also make presentations to students in Grades 10-12 about workplace health and safety. In addition, the WCB is developing a new program called *Speakers Resource*. This Internet-based resource will feature a network of volunteer speakers from industry, health and safety agencies and organizations and unions who can speak on a wide variety of topics related to injury prevention for young workers. The resource will be available in the Fall.
- **Young Worker Health and Safety Certificate Program:** The WCB is working with a multi-stakeholder group on a new Young Worker Certificate Program aimed at providing basic health and safety knowledge and skills to young workers beginning their working careers.

- **"Joe Who?":** A youth-to-youth theatrical performance written, produced and performed by the drama class from McNair Secondary School in Richmond. The play offers a youth perspective on the consequences of workplace injuries and raises awareness among

working youth. A video of McNair students performing the play, along with the script and director's notes, is available for use or adaptation by secondary schools.

- **Workplace Safety Blitz:** Throughout the summer, WCB officers visit employers that hire large numbers of young workers to increase employer and worker awareness of hazards faced by young workers.
- **Research:** The WCB conducts and sponsors research with young people and stakeholders on why and how young workers are injured on the job and what should be done to reduce the risks they face. The WCB also conducts in-depth data analysis on time-loss claims to help shape the focus and direction of young worker initiatives.
- **Partnerships and Awareness Activities:** The WCB raises awareness of workplace health and safety with an annual province-wide publicity campaign aimed at youth, employers and other stakeholder groups. Throughout the year, the Board also builds and promotes strategic partnerships and conducts awareness activities with key young worker stakeholder groups in education, training and best practices.

Resources

- **Videos, brochures, posters, information bulletins and other materials** are available for use at schools, job sites or the home.
- **Student WorkSafe:** A comprehensive health and safety curriculum developed by the WCB is available on-line at <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources-Educators.asp>.

- **"Joe Who?":** A videotape of this play about workplace safety written, produced and performed by drama students from McNair Secondary School in Richmond is available, along with directors' notes and script. To order, call the WCB Young Worker section at 604-276-3100 or toll free in B.C. at 1-888-621-7233.
- **3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training:** This guide provides an orientation program for young workers. It has been designed to help employers and supervisors keep young and new workers safe on the job.
- **Ergonomic Tips for the Hospitality Industry:** A series of brochures providing information on frequent types of musculoskeletal injuries in the hospitality industry and tips on how to prevent these types of injuries.

These and many other resources for young workers are available on-line at <http://www.worksafebc.com/publications>.

More Information

If you have questions on workplace health and safety and the young worker, call the WCB Prevention Information Line at 604 276-3100 or toll-free at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233).

Visit the WCB web site for news and information from the WCB.

[worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com)



In the next hour, at least one worker like you will get injured on the job.



Make sure it won't be you or one of your friends

IF YOU'RE YOUNG AND YOU WORK, YOU'RE AT SPECIAL RISK

Young workers are especially vulnerable to workplace injuries, and it doesn't matter what industry they work in. We all have a part to play in helping young workers work safely.

Who are young workers?

There are more than a quarter of a million young workers in British Columbia, ranging in age from 15 to 24. Many are high-school, college, or university students who hold part-time jobs while attending school and who take on full-time jobs during summer months. Others work full-time, usually in entry-level jobs, and are just beginning their climb up the work ladder. They work in many areas—from fast-food businesses and retail clothing stores to construction and tree planting.

These young people share one thing in common—they are at high risk of being injured on the job. Their injuries range from minor to serious, can range from short-term effects to long-term disabilities, and sometimes result in death.

Why focus on young workers?

What makes young workers different? Aren't accidents and injuries a hazard for all ages? The answer, of course, is yes. But a number of work-related facts raise special concerns about young workers.

- More than 50% of accidents involving young workers occur during the worker's first six months on the job. This is much higher than the percentage of accidents involving workers over age 25 during the same time period.
- Males under 25 are much more likely to be injured on the job than any other workers.

Every working day in B.C., about 34 young workers are injured on the job, and every week about five of these workers will be permanently disabled.

Why are injuries to young workers so high?

There is a common belief that young people feel they are invincible and indestructible so they take risks, thinking they won't be hurt. Although some young people may act this way, this behaviour is not as widespread as people believe. There are a number of other reasons for the high injury rate of young workers:

- As new workers, young people are likely to be inexperienced and unfamiliar with many of the tasks required of them. They are probably unable to recognize workplace hazards.
- Often they don't get the proper training or supervision to do their jobs safely.
- Many of their positive traits (such as enthusiasm, energy, and eagerness to please) often lead them to take on tasks they are not prepared for.

- Young workers are often reluctant to ask for help and guidance or to question work practices for fear of losing their jobs or appearing incapable of doing them properly. They are often unaware of their rights as workers.
- Many young workers come to jobs tired after putting in a whole day at school or at another job. Also, some tasks might be beyond the physical ability of some young workers to do safely.
- Young workers trust their employers and more experienced co-workers to look after them, while often employers and senior co-workers will unintentionally put them at risk by giving them the more difficult, boring, risky, or physically-challenging jobs.

“[You] accept whatever you're told; [you] need the job and don't want to risk losing it.”
“[We're] not told how to do our jobs, just told to do them.”

Youth participants at a WCB young worker focus group

What kind of injuries happen to young workers?

Most people think of workplace injuries as something that happens to those doing physical labour. It is true that work in areas such as construction, forestry, and manufacturing results in more serious injuries for young workers, and this is why these industries are considered hazardous. But the majority of young workers work in the hospitality and retail service industries, and many injuries also occur there.

Injuries that happen to young workers range from the less severe and short-term, such as strains, cuts, and bruises, to the more serious ones that may have longer-term consequences, such as concussions, burns, and amputations. In between are acute injuries that result in short-term disabilities, such as broken bones and dislocations.

The following table shows the main types of accidents that occur to young workers in specific industries.

The table shows that some types of accidents happen more often than others. To help prevent these and other accidents, workers need to be aware of their surroundings and to work safely.

For example:

- Overexertion (MSI)*: Workers should be shown how to bend and lift properly and be provided with proper equipment. They should always use a step or ladder when objects need to be put on or taken down from a high shelf. Workers may need assistance to lift or move something heavy or awkward. Most of all, they should be encouraged to ask for help whenever they need it.

It doesn't occur to them [young workers] that being a cook in a fast-food restaurant could be dangerous. Until they get third-degree burns to their hands in a grease fire . . . have a finger severed by a knife . . . or permanently injure their back by falling on a freshly washed floor.

Roberta Ellis, Vice-President, Prevention, WCB

- Struck by an object: Workers should be careful and cautious when working in crowded areas and at a fast pace. They should wear any required safety gear at all times. All tools and equipment should be stored safely when not in use.
- Falls, trips, and slips: Workers should wear appropriate and comfortable footwear. Floor and stair areas should always be clear and dry. Workers should watch for and report potential dangers such as power cords, spills, and tears in carpet.