

Yukon employers guide to young worker safety



YUKON WORKERS'
COMPENSATION
HEALTH AND
SAFETY BOARD

It's up to you to
help keep them safe



WorkSafe™

Acknowledgments

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About this guide

This guide is intended to help you—a Yukon employer—keep your young workers safe on the job. We hope it will help you better understand the young worker safety issue and encourage you to evaluate and, if necessary, modify your current safety education and training program. It is not meant to replace your current worker orientation and training program but to help you build on what's already working well in your workplace.

Although this guide focuses on young workers—those aged 15 to 24—much of the content is also applicable to new workers, regardless of age. Approximately one-third of all accepted workers' compensation claims occur within the first six months of employment. Workers who are both new and young are especially at risk of workplace injury.

About the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (YWCHSB) is a crown corporation that administers the *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The Board is funded by employer assessment payments and investment income.

In addition to administering the workers' compensation system, the YWCHSB promotes workplace safety, offers training and general awareness courses, operates a lending library, conducts work site inspections, investigates workplace accidents, and provides rehabilitation counselling.

The YWCHSB is working with Yukon employers and workers towards its vision of creating ideal workplaces. This vision will have been achieved when:

- There is a strong safety culture in Yukon workplaces.
- Workers and employers make it a priority to identify and prevent potential accidents from happening.
- Disabled workers are welcomed into flexible work sites where their valuable skills are put to use.

Workplace safety and the young worker



Young workers aged 15 to 24, and particularly males this age, are at much higher risk of workplace injury than other workers.

More than half of workplace injuries involving young workers occur within their first six months on the job; many happen within the first month of employment.

Young worker injuries range from relatively minor injuries such as strains, cuts and bruises to more serious ones like broken bones, dislocations, concussions, burns and

amputations. These injuries can produce short-term effects or long-term disabilities. In rare cases, they may even result in death.

The overall injury rate for young workers in Canada declined in the 1990s, thanks in part to the combined efforts of employers, unions, workers and workers' compensation organizations. Even so, the number of injuries involving young workers is still much too high.

Why are young workers at higher risk of workplace injury?

Bear in mind as you read the list below that many of these points apply to new as well as to young workers.

- Young people are usually inexperienced workers who may not recognize many common workplace hazards.
- Young workers are often unfamiliar with many of the tasks they have to perform in their jobs, and they may require more training than older, more experienced workers.
- Some of the tasks young workers are expected to perform may be beyond their physical capabilities.
- Young workers may be asked to operate equipment designed for adults.
- Young workers may be overly eager to impress their employers. They don't want to appear incompetent or incapable of performing a task, even if they need more time to learn how to do the job properly.
- Some young workers might feel pressured to get the job done quickly in order to keep up with older, more experienced workers.
- Young workers may be reluctant to question their employers about the safety of work practices for fear of embarrassment or reprisals.
- Many young workers are also full-time students. By the time they get to work, they're tired from a long day or week at their studies. Fatigue can contribute to higher rates of workplace injury.
- Some young people have a false sense of invincibility that may lead them to overestimate their capabilities or underestimate risks. Young men, in particular, may be willing to take chances and ignore any possible harmful consequences.
- Many young workers may be unaware of their safety rights and responsibilities in the workplace.



How are young people injured on the job?

Young people are at risk of workplace injury in all Yukon industries, not only in those that appear to be high risk, such as construction, forestry or manufacturing. In fact, the majority of young people employed in the Yukon work in the hospitality and retail service sectors, and that's where most workplace injuries occur.

The most common causes of workplace injury are overexertion, being struck by an object, falling or slipping, and contact with hot objects.

The chart below outlines the most common type of workplace accident among young workers. It will help you identify hazards in your particular workplace that you might not have considered.

Industry	#1 Type of Accident among Young Workers	#2 Type of Accident among Young Workers
Accommodation/Food Services (includes hotels, motels, restaurants, fast food outlets)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)	Contact with a hot object (burns caused by contact with stoves/ovens, flames, hot utensils/dishes or hot foods)
Retail Stores	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)
General Construction	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)
Wood/Paper Product Manufacturing	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)
Other Services (includes car washing, laundries, auto service and repair, homemaker services)	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)
Metal Product Manufacturing	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)
Transportation Services (includes general trucking, water transport, bus lines)	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)
Forestry	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)	Falls (injuries caused by falls from stairs, ladders, vehicles and structures)
Wholesale Businesses	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)
Food/Beverage Product Manufacturing	Overexertion (injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging or airborne tools, equipment or other materials)

Workplace safety rights and responsibilities



Everyone has the right to a safe work environment, and all parties in the workplace—employers, supervisors and workers—share in the responsibility of controlling hazards and preventing injuries.

Employers

Yukon employers are legally responsible for:

- Maintaining safe and healthful work sites.
- Training their workers.
- Providing adequate supervision.

Yukon employers' responsibilities are detailed in Section 3 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Among them are to ensure that:

- The workplace, machinery, equipment and processes are safe and do not present health risks.
- Work techniques and procedures are in use to prevent or reduce the risk of occupational illness and injury.
- Workers are properly trained and adequately supervised.
- Workers are made aware of any workplace hazards.
- Workers are informed of their rights, responsibilities and duties.

Supervisors

The task of worker training is normally carried out by supervisors. Supervision of workers, especially of young and new workers, is a serious responsibility not to be taken lightly. Employers have a legal obligation to ensure that their supervisors are knowledgeable and competent. Supervisors, in turn, have legal obligations to the employees they supervise.

Supervisors' responsibilities are spelled out in Section 7 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and include:

- Properly instructing workers.
- Ensuring work is performed without undue risk and with any necessary protective equipment or clothing.
- Advising workers of any potential or actual workplace dangers.

Workers

Workers, too, share in the responsibility for workplace safety. Their responsibilities are described in Section 9 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and include:

- Taking necessary precautions to ensure their own and fellow workers' health and safety.
- Using any safety equipment and wearing any protective clothing provided by their employers.
- Complying with health and safety procedures given to them.
- Reporting any hazardous situations to their supervisors.
- Reporting any workplace accidents or injuries.

Section 11 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* prohibits any conduct, such as horseplay or practical jokes, that could be hazardous. All Yukon employers, supervisors and workers are bound by this section of the Act.

Section 14 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* gives workers the legal right to refuse any work they believe presents an "undue hazard," and stipulates the steps that workers and their supervisors must follow in the event of such a refusal.

The Act prohibits reprisals or disciplinary actions against workers who, in good faith, exercise the right to refuse hazardous work.

Workplace hazards



Recognize hazards

The biggest contributor to workplace injury among young workers may be inexperience; many young workers simply don't recognize workplace hazards that could lead to injury, disease or even death. They lack overall job experience and are at first unfamiliar with your particular workplace. You will therefore have to point out even the most obvious hazards, such as hot fat, moving equipment or discarded needles. You must also explain the safeguards you have put in place to minimize these hazards, such as ventilation devices, protective gear or clothing and guards around tools and other equipment.

When pointing out the hazards in your workplace to young employees:

- Discuss any past accidents and 'near misses' that might have occurred.
- Talk about how these accidents and incidents might have been avoided.
- Explain what you have done to prevent them from occurring again.

Your young workers need to be alert to hazards so that they can correct any unsafe working conditions or report them to their supervisors. Explain what your workers should do when they spot a hazard:

1. Eliminate the hazard if they can do so safely.
2. If they can't eliminate the hazard safely, report it immediately to their supervisor, who will ensure that corrective action is taken.

Reduce the risk of workplace injury

The Yukon's General Safety Regulations specify a variety of workplace conditions that dictate the use of special protective gear or clothing to reduce the risk of workplace injury. Employers are responsible for providing these items to workers. (Workers are responsible for their own footwear and for wearing clothing that is suitable for the weather conditions in which they are working.)

Below are a few of the hazardous conditions that require the use of personal protective equipment. Refer to the Yukon's General Safety Regulations for more information.

Hazard	Precaution Required
Chain saw operation	Leg, foot, eye, head and ear protection
Exposure to moving vehicles	Highly visible clothing and headwear
Proximity to falling, flying or thrown objects	Safety headgear
Snow machine, motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle use	Approved safety helmet
Handling of materials dangerous to the eyes	Goggles or face shields
High noise levels	Noise-reduction equipment

Training the young worker



Make sure the job fits

Even before you begin training your young worker, you should have considered whether the job is suitable for him or her. Jobs that require lengthy training or a high degree of skill and jobs that involve critical tasks or a lot of responsibility are probably not appropriate for most young workers. This is especially true for summer students who are going to be in your employ for only a short time.

Think like a young worker

When training a young worker, try to remember your own early work experiences.

- How did you feel your first few days on the job?
- What were your attitudes towards safety?
- How well did you receive instruction?

Were you patient, open to suggestion and willing to admit your ignorance? Or were you impatient, ready to jump in and do things your own way and inclined to pretend to know more than you did?

Young workers may be less patient and less predictable than older, more experienced workers. They may be inclined to disregard safety instructions, to experiment with different ways of accomplishing tasks, even to take chances.

Young workers, especially temporary ones, are also motivated differently than your employees who expect to work for you for a long time. Young workers may not feel part of the workplace in the way that your long-term employees do; they may therefore act more independently and feel isolated from other workers.

Take more time, give more help

What does all this mean for you, the employer? It means that your young workers may need more time, more help and more supervision than older, more experienced workers. It means, too, that you may have to work harder to communicate effectively. For example, you might ask your young worker to explain instructions back to you to verify that he or she understood you.

Young worker training action plan

The young worker training action plan proposed below is meant to help you build on the training you are already doing in your workplace. Note that many of these suggestions apply to both new and young workers.

Before you begin

1. Give your young worker a safety orientation to the work site on the first day of work before he or she starts working. (You may find it helpful to use the “Orientation Record” on page 15 of this guide.) Explain what to do should an emergency arise in your workplace: a fire, power outage, violent customer, etc.
2. Discuss the shared responsibility for workplace safety of workers, supervisors and employers and the right of workers to refuse hazardous work. (This discussion should be a review for workers who have taken the **Student WorkSafe™** program in high school.) You may wish to show the video *Safety and the New/Young Worker*, available from the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board.
3. Make sure that you and your supervisors set a good example by following all the safety rules you are going to teach your young worker.

A. Prepare the worker

1. Explain in detail the job the worker will be doing and the reasons for doing it.
2. Explain in detail any safety precautions the worker needs to take, including use of personal protective equipment or clothing. Encourage questions to make sure the worker understands everything you’re saying and doing. Take as much time as necessary to ensure full understanding.
3. If a written safe work procedure for a task is available, provide a copy or tell the worker where a copy can be found.





B. Demonstrate the task

1. Break the task down into several specific procedures.
2. Demonstrate each procedure at normal speed.
3. Demonstrate the procedure again at slow speed and encourage questions.
4. Introduce during the normal sequence of tasks any safety precautions the worker needs to take.
5. Have the worker perform the procedure until he or she can do it exactly as required, keeping in mind the worker may not be able to perform it up to speed.
6. After the worker is able to perform all of the individual procedures properly, have the worker perform the entire task. Encourage questions and allow the worker to repeat procedures as many times as necessary until the entire task has been learned.
7. Teach only as much as the worker can learn at any one time to avoid “information overload.”

C. Observe and check progress

1. When you feel the worker is ready, allow him or her to perform the task alone.
2. Tell the worker where to get help in your absence.
3. Encourage initiative and respect suggestions.
4. Check in with the worker at unscheduled times. Make visits shorter and less frequent as the worker progresses.
5. Correct any unsafe work habits.
6. Monitor the worker to ensure that safety standards are maintained.

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board operates a lending library of videos and other resources on a great variety of workplace safety topics. Videos may be borrowed at no charge for up to two weeks. The Board also runs courses on a number of workplace safety topics. Courses are offered in the Board's Whitehorse building and at other locations throughout the Yukon. Call the Occupational Health and Safety office at 867-667-5450 for a list of videos or for more information about our course offerings.

Visit our web site (www.wcb.yk.ca) for updates on our courses and library acquisitions.

The following videos and publications are particularly relevant to the topic of young worker safety.

Resources

Videos

Nobody Told Me Nothing (Cat. # 151)

Training and skills for the job

New on the Job (Cat. # 181)

Hazard awareness, sharing responsibility for workplace safety, personal protective equipment, etc.

Commitment to Safety: Safety Orientation (Cat. # 135)

Emergencies, hazardous materials, avoiding risks, removal of hazards, reporting accidents, etc.

Pre-job Safety Checklist (Cat. # 195)

Five-point, pre-job checklist to increase safety awareness.

Safety and the New and Young Worker (no Cat. #)

Shows young supervisors and new workers making errors that result in serious injury.

Publications

Occupational Health and Safety Handbook (YWCHSB publication): Complete text of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Regulations

Safety Instruction of Workers, the Responsibility of Employers and Supervisors (YWCHSB pamphlet)

Keeping Young Workers Safe (Reprint of an Occupational Health and Safety Canada article)

Sound Advice, Sensible Solutions for Noise Reduction and Preventing Hearing Loss (YWCHSB pamphlet)



Orientation record

Worker's name: _____

Supervisor's name: _____

First day of work: _____

Date of orientation: _____

Name of person giving the orientation: _____

Orientation checklist:

- Explain how to get first aid. Provide the name and phone number of the first aid attendant (if there is one). Show where the first aid kit or room is located.
- Explain the procedure for reporting injuries and accidents.
- Show the emergency exits and explain rescue and evacuation procedures.
- Introduce a health and safety committee member or worker representative, if any.
- Explain the procedure for reporting potential hazards and unsafe work conditions.
- Explain that your company doesn't want any worker performing a task that the worker is not trained to do safely.
- Identify and discuss potential hazards on the job site.

Add any other health and safety items the worker needs to know about your workplace, such as required personal protective equipment or security procedures for working alone. You may need to provide education and training for these at another time.

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