

London Drugs

A proven prescription for young worker safety

When it comes to applying an ounce of prevention against high injury rates for young and new workers, London Drugs administers an award-winning remedy.

The prescription is an orientation program designed to help people feel safe and secure at 68 company locations in Canada, 44 of them in British Columbia.

Previously honoured by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineers, the program:

- Uses a mentorship program that buddies a Health and Safety committee member with a new employee
- Tests safety knowledge immediately after probation and on a yearly basis
- Informs parents by addressing safety concerns specific to their child's workplace

New employees must also complete a written test that consists of nearly three dozen open-ended safety questions.

In all company locations from British Columbia to Manitoba, new workers must write about the safety specifics of their workplaces. Subjects include: what to do if a robbery occurs, how to read material safety data sheets about hazardous chemicals, where to get first aid, who in the store should be told of unsafe situations, lock-out procedures for compactors, and the basics on their local safety committee.

The test also encourages dialogue with the young worker with the last question: "Do you have any concerns or questions after completing this review?"

New hires are well-prepared for the test. So that they understand what happens on a day-to-day basis, new workers receive a comprehensive, hands-on orientation from their mentors.

“Our safety mentor program ensures that any new worker we hire is monitored by someone who is familiar with safety at London Drugs,” says Laurie Lowes, the company’s Manager of Health and Safety. “When we hire a worker that is under the age of 19, we send a letter home to their parents – explaining our safety program and encouraging the parents to discuss workplace safety with them.”

Many parents are unaware of the risks in retail. For example: fire and robbery may be obvious risks to some, harassment and “bio-hazardous and infectious waste”—such as syringes—may not. The latter generally applies to the company’s syringe drop-off program (monitored and controlled by the pharmacy department) for diabetic customers.

London Drugs also places particular emphasis on the mundane but equally important risks. New workers are trained to properly lift boxes—using the legs, rather than the back. They also learn how to safely open boxes with a retractable razor.

London Drug’s proactive program continues even after training. New workers are assessed after three months, and all employees are annually evaluated on their knowledge.

As a result of London Drug’s commitment to safety, young workers learn that their well-being is a priority.

“While a good employer will always do their best to protect workers and accommodate an injured worker, those injuries often have a devastating effect on the young worker and their loved ones,” says Lowes. “Young worker safety must be top priority for all employers.”