

YOUNG WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION

Why focus on young workers?

There are more than 300,000 young workers in British Columbia who, like all workers, have a right to a safe and healthy workplace. In 2004, there were 23,000 young workers, most commonly working as general labourers, in the construction sector.

Young workers, particularly males, are at a much higher risk of injury than other workers are. More than half of the workplace accidents involving workers aged 15 to 24 occur during the first six months on a job with almost 20 per cent occurring during the first month.

Without the knowledge and experience of older workers, it's more difficult for youth to recognize potentially risky situations and equipment. Eager to please and unwilling to make waves, young workers may be hesitant to question the safety of work procedures or ask for proper safety training. Many feel pressured to complete a job quickly and can be swayed by peer pressure, regardless of the risk involved.

A young worker's sense of invincibility makes it easier for employers to assign dangerous tasks to them. Without a thorough understanding of their rights or responsibilities, young workers may be reluctant to ask questions or refuse to perform an unsafe work practice.

Who is responsible for young worker safety?

The employer is primarily responsible for ensuring that a work place is safe and healthy.

Anyone involved with young workers has a stake in promoting a safe and healthy work environment. Employers, supervisors, experienced co-workers, unions, educators, parents, community groups and young workers themselves share in the responsibility. As the most vulnerable members of our workforce, young workers need extra supervision to help them learn how to make safe and healthy choices on the job. Like all workers, they need to understand their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

How frequently are young workers hurt on the job?

- In 2005, 151¹ young workers were seriously injured in workplace accidents , 34 in construction
- Eleven young male workers died in work related accidents.

In what industries did the eleven young male workers die in 2005?

Industrial accident – Construction	5
Industrial accident – Service Sector	2
Industrial accident – Forestry	1
Industrial accident – Manufacturing	1
Industrial accident – Transportation	1
Industrial accident – Agriculture	1

¹ Serious Injury claim counts represent the number of STD/LTD/FTL claims coded with an ICD9 medical diagnosis that indicates serious injury. ICD9 Serious Injury claims include major fractures (e.g., skull, spine, pelvis, multiple fractures, etc.), amputations, 3rd degree burns, serious eye injuries, and other serious spinal, head or crushing injuries that are based on 165 medical diagnosis type ICD9 codes. ICD9 Serious Injury claim counts are adjusted to include an estimate for uncoded claims, and exclude accepted fatal claims.

Three of the young construction workers who died were involved in forklift incidents, one was electrocuted when he came in contact with a power line and one fell 19 feet from the third floor unguarded balcony of a building.

What is the trend for young worker injuries?

- Since 1995, the young worker injury rate has decreased by 33%
- Since 1995, the young male injury rate decreased by 31% and by 29% for young female workers

What is the trend for serious injuries for young construction workers?

Sector Name	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Construction	24	21	33	20	34

Where are most young workers injured?

Industries with high young worker claim counts, costs, and duration receive special attention from WorkSafeBC. In 2006, we are focusing our prevention efforts on following high risk sectors: construction, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, and transportation/warehousing.

What are the most dangerous tasks for young workers?

- Lifting objects as retail clerks, shipper-receivers, labourers, material handlers in a number of industries.
- Working on ladders, stairs, scaffolding, other raised areas in any industry.
- Driving or riding in vehicles and operating or working near mobile equipment in any industry.
- Using knives in food service, retail sales, and supermarkets.
- Working with hot substances or equipment in restaurants.
- Operating food slicers in restaurants, supermarkets as deli sales clerks, cooks, food service helpers/preparers and retail sales clerks.
- Working near running equipment or machinery.

What resources are available to young workers?

- **Prevention Information Line**

WorkSafeBC offers support for workers, employers and others who have questions or concerns about occupational safety and health. The Prevention Information Line at (604) 276-3100 or toll-free in B.C. at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233) can provide information on safety and health, or is available to report concerns anonymously.

- **WorkSafeBC Website**

A comprehensive web site dedicated exclusively to the safety of young workers has been developed. It includes a broad range of information for youth, parents, educators, employers and other stakeholders. To access it follow the links from www.worksafebc.com or directly at www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Home.asp

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