

# 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 Ltd. administers an award-winning remedy.



The prescription is an orientation program designed to assure “that they know critical safety information, and that we’ve done necessary due diligence,” says Laurie Lowes, the company’s manager of health and safety.

Kelowna London Drugs Manager Shane Bennett developed and introduced the program with head office support four years ago when he was an assistant manager.

“Our new, young workers had only a basic concept of safety and the dangers inherent to retail operations like ours,” he says. It’s a different story now, thanks to the program.

Honoured by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineers (CSSE), the program:

- ▶ Uses a buddy system with co-workers assigned to mentor all new employees.
- ▶ Tests their safety knowledge in writing when the probation period ends.
- ▶ Invites parents to “play an important role in ensuring your son or daughter can fulfill their new responsibilities in the safest way possible.”

Mentoring is a common approach in many industries, but London Drugs takes it to a different level with a safety “checklist” for new employees. There is also a test that consists of nearly three dozen open-ended safety questions which require written answers.

In all company locations from British Columbia to Manitoba, new workers — and all employees for annual evaluations — must write about the safety specifics of their workplaces. Subjects include: what to do if a robbery occurs, hazardous material safety data sheets, where to get first aid, who in the store should be told of unsafe situations, lock-out procedures for compactors, and basics on the local safety committee. The last question asks, “Do you have any concerns or questions after completing this review?”

New hires are well-prepared for the checklist test. Before writing it, they undergo a comprehensive, hands-on orientation from mentors to what happens day-to-day in the workplace.

“But the first thing that happens when we employ a young worker,” notes Lowes, “is a letter to parents. It lists some risks in our stores, emphasizes that safety comes first at London Drugs, encourages at-home discussions about safety, and invites parents to call me directly with any concerns.”

Typically, the letter generates positive feedback, and Lowes credits the focus on safety with “helping make us an employer of choice for young workers and their families.”

“Most parents have no idea of the risks in retail,” according to Lowes. “A real surprise for many moms and dads is the possibility of potentially-infectious, bio-hazardous waste.” (This generally applies to a free syringe drop-off program for diabetic customers that’s monitored and controlled by store pharmacy departments.)

The letter to parents was introduced in 2003, an improvement to the original London Drugs orientation program that had earned the company its CSSE award a few months earlier.

Over the years, the program’s impetus has grown. Initially, it was driven by senior managers, when their participation on safety committees first became mandatory. “Now it’s integral to all store operations,” says Lowes, “a source of company-wide passion for safety and a matter of pride for everyone who works for London Drugs.”

*For more information about the program, contact Shane Bennett at 250-860-3331, or Laurie Lowes at 604-272-7115.*