

The Supervisor

**A Safety Video about
Supervision in the Workplace**



Video Discussion Guide

WORK SAFE BC

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Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.

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Introduction

Workers between the ages of 15 and 24 are at greater risk of being injured on the job than any other group of workers. These workers are at risk for many reasons, including lack of training and inadequate supervision.

The Supervisor was created to raise awareness among employers, supervisors, and workers about the importance of ensuring that young workers, new workers, and their supervisors receive adequate training and instruction.

While the *Workers Compensation Act* states that it's the employer's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers in the workplace, it's usually the supervisor who is assigned this duty. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all workers, including young workers and new workers, are able to do their jobs safely and effectively. Research shows that many supervisors have not received adequate health and safety training, especially those who are young workers themselves.

This video was produced by WorkSafeBC in partnership with the BC/Yukon Regional Youth Initiatives Unit of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Did you know?

Young workers are more likely to rely on their immediate supervisor for health and safety training and direction than older more experienced workers; yet many supervisors don't fully understand their responsibilities for the health and safety of workers under their supervision.

Video Synopsis

The Supervisor is a docudrama that examines issues related to supervisor responsibility for workplace health and safety. It depicts the emotional, legal, and financial consequences of a fictionalized workplace accident that leads to the death of a young worker. In the video, Joe, a young supervisor, is haunted by memories of the fatal accident and visited by the dead worker's ghost. Viewers learn about the accident through Joe's flashbacks.

When first promoted to the role of supervisor, Joe has many ideas on how to improve worker health and safety. But his boss has no time for his new ideas, so Joe lets the matter drop. He doesn't know that it's his legal responsibility to ensure the health and safety of his workers.

Joe's inaction ultimately leads to the fatal accident and the young worker's death. The company is found liable of gross negligence and fined \$150,000.

The impact of the accident is reinforced by interviews with those involved: a father devastated by the loss of his son, a post-traumatic stress therapist, a Crown prosecutor, a WorkSafeBC safety officer, and a sawmill owner. All provide very real and personal perspectives on the repercussions of workplace injuries and fatalities.

Did you know?

Every employer is responsible for ensuring that workers are adequately informed, instructed, trained, and supervised in carrying out their work.

Who This Video is For

This video is a valuable resource for employers, supervisors, workers (especially new workers and young workers), unions, educators, parents – virtually every member of the community.

The Supervisor can be used in worker orientation sessions, health and safety meetings, or for any of the following individuals:

- Students, as part of their career education
- Post-secondary learners
- Youth groups
- Parents

It can also be incorporated into existing education and training sessions for supervisors and young workers, and used in industry training programs.

Suggestions for Use

The following pages contain viewing strategies and support materials designed to help viewers learn more about responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. Copies of the guide can be downloaded from <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/>

Did you know?

Supervisors have the right to receive workplace health and safety training, the right to refuse unsafe work, and the right not to be discriminated against.

Previewing Strategies

The following strategies have been developed for smaller-sized audiences watching the video in a facilitated setting. For suggestions on how to use the video in different viewing situations, please see Alternative Viewing Strategies (page 10).

1. Initiate a discussion on the rights and responsibilities of supervisors. Emphasize the following key points:
 - Supervisors must meet the standard of due diligence. This means all reasonable care must be taken in all the circumstances of the workplace to protect the health and safety of all workers.
 - Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all workers under their supervision.
 - A supervisor need not have the title "supervisor." A supervisor is any person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties.
 - Supervisors must . . .
 - know their responsibilities
 - have the authority to carry out their responsibilities
 - have the ability to carry out their responsibilities
 - carry them out

For more information, see "Supervisors: What are my health and safety responsibilities in the workplace?" (page 11).

2. Follow up with a brief discussion on young workers and why they are at greater risk. Emphasize the following key points:
 - Young male workers are more likely than any other group of workers to be injured on the job.
 - Young workers are responsible for working without undue risk to themselves or others.
 - Young workers are entitled to refuse to do tasks or work in conditions that they think are unsafe.

For more information, see "Workers: What are my health and safety responsibilities in the workplace?" (page 14) and "Characteristics of Young Workers" (page 15).

3. Explain that employers also have significant workplace health and safety responsibilities. Emphasize the following key points:
 - Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, employers must provide a healthy and safe workplace, adequate training and supervision, and properly maintained and functioning safety equipment.
 - Employers must assign responsibility, accountability, and authority to supervisory staff.

For more information, see "Employers: What are my health and safety responsibilities in the workplace?" (page 16).

Did You Know?

Supervisors often inadvertently put young workers at risk by giving them the most boring and dangerous work.

4. Ask viewers to keep in mind the following questions while watching the video:
- Why was Joe affected so deeply by the accident?
 - To what extent was Joe legally responsible for the accident?
 - What could Joe have done differently? What prevented him from taking action to prevent the accident?
 - Who do you think bore the most responsibility in this situation? (e.g., Employer? Supervisor? Worker?)
 - What steps should be taken to prevent this type of accident in the future?
 - What steps might you take to ensure an accident does not occur in your workplace?

Warning . . .

Before showing the video, inform viewers that it contains graphic scenes, emotional trauma, and coarse language. Sensitive viewers or those who've had someone close to them seriously injured in a workplace accident may have difficulty watching some scenes.

Post-Viewing Strategies

1. After the video, engage viewers in a brief discussion. Facilitate the discussion by revisiting the focus questions they were given before the video started (see previous page). You may also wish to refer to the Support Materials section included at the back of this guide (pages 11 - 17).
2. Re-emphasize the importance of workplace health and safety by pointing out that due diligence is essential, even in the making of this video. For example, the ghost of the worker standing on the forklift may look unsafe; however, due diligence was done and a risk assessment was performed. The forklift was 1.83 metres (6 feet) in height; the top of the forklift was tested to make sure it was stable; a ladder was close by; the actor first stood at that height to make sure he was comfortable; and people were standing by off camera to further ensure his safety.
3. Have viewers write down what they've learned about health and safety in the workplace. Encourage them to record any thoughts or feelings that occurred to them during the viewing of the video and post-video discussion.

Did You Know?

All workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. Supervisors have the right to refuse to direct workers to perform work they consider unsafe.

4. If there's time, have viewers complete the Health and Safety Responsibility Quiz (page 18). Review their answers to see how much they retained. Fill in any gaps in understanding.

Alternative Viewing Strategies

For large groups: Organize small discussion groups of three to four people for pre- and post-viewing discussions.

For single viewers: Before and after the video, you may choose to facilitate a one-on-one discussion about what the viewer knows, wonders, and has learned about responsibility for workplace health and safety.

Alternative debrief: Instead of having viewers complete the Health and Safety Responsibility Quiz after they've watched the video, you may choose to have a brief discussion with them on the subject of workplace health and safety. Fill in any gaps in their understanding.

Did You Know?

Employers and supervisors must immediately investigate unsafe acts and conditions observed or reported by workers, and make sure each unsafe act or condition is remedied without delay.

Support Materials

The following pages contain information that you may want to share with viewers after they've seen the video. Please feel free to photocopy these sheets and distribute them as handouts.

Supervisors: What are my health and safety responsibilities in the workplace?

A supervisor is a person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties — even if they don't have the title of supervisor.

Young workers and new workers look to their supervisors as role models, expecting them to provide the training and supervision necessary to do their jobs safely.

As a supervisor, you have the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers under your supervision. Young workers and new workers are often inexperienced and unable to recognize hazards. Many won't ask questions about workplace health and safety for fear of looking incompetent or simply because they don't know what to ask. Providing adequate supervision is perhaps the single most important duty a supervisor has.

As a supervisor, you must meet the standard of due diligence:

- Know your responsibilities
- Have the authority to carry out your responsibilities
- Have the ability to carry out your responsibilities
- Carry them out

- Ensure that your employer provides you with the information, instruction, training, and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of the workers you supervise.
- Encourage all workers, particularly young workers and new workers, to ask for help when they are unsure of a task.
- Know and comply with workplace health and safety regulations that apply to your workplace.
- Evaluate equipment to ensure that it is safe for use and make sure it is operated safely.

Ensure you know your rights — and the workers under your supervision know their rights — about workplace health and safety. These include the right to:

- Participate in health and safety committees
- Refuse unsafe work
- Not be discriminated against for exercising any right or in carrying out health and safety responsibilities

In addition:

- Make sure you know the hazards associated with the jobs you are supervising and ensure your workers are made aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable hazards in the area.
- Know the laws and regulations that apply to the job(s) you are supervising.
- Consult and cooperate with your joint committee or worker health and safety representative.
- Be a role model and lead by example.

Finally, keep in mind that the supervision of young workers and new workers requires a higher level of due diligence because of their general lack of experience. You may need to spend more time making sure these workers understand why the task is performed in a certain way and making sure they are ready before leaving them to perform the work alone.

"He — Joe — was a keener. You know the type. Good boss — tries to please everybody. Management wants more production. The workers need more training. He's the pig in the middle."

— **Ghost of dead worker from the video** —

Did You Know?

Workers **MUST NOT** be disciplined for refusing to perform a task they have reasonable cause to believe is dangerous.

Workers: What are my health and safety rights and responsibilities in the workplace?

You have the right to:

- Information, instruction, and training about safe work procedures and how to recognize hazards on the job
- Supervision to make sure you work without undue risk
- Equipment and safety gear required to do your job safely (you are responsible for providing your own clothing to protect yourself against the natural elements, including general purpose work gloves, safety footwear, and safety headgear)
- Refuse to do tasks or work in conditions that you think are unsafe — and you can't be fired or disciplined for refusing
- Participate in workplace health and safety committees and activities

You are responsible for working without undue risk to yourself or others. To keep safe on the job:

- Don't assume you can do something you've never done before. Ask your supervisor to show you how to do it safely *before* you begin work. Ask your employer for job safety training.
- Use all safety gear and protective clothing when and where required.
- Always follow safe work procedures and encourage your co-workers to do the same.
- Immediately correct unsafe conditions or report them right away to your supervisor.

- Know how to handle any hazardous materials or chemicals you use on the job.
- If you have any doubts about your safety, talk to your supervisor.
- Tell your supervisor of any physical or mental conditions that may make you unable to work safely.

Characteristics of Young Workers

The following characteristics are associated with young workers and may be contributing factors in young worker-related workplace injuries. How many of these characteristics describe you or the workers you supervise?

Young workers often:

- Are convinced of their own invulnerability and believe that nothing bad could ever happen to them
- Are reluctant to ask questions for fear of appearing ignorant or stupid
- Are distracted by other things going on in their lives
- Are often tired from juggling other responsibilities, such as school, homework, and family/social life
- Accept physically demanding or dangerous tasks as part of their job
- Feel rushed to get things done
- Rely on their immediate supervisors for training and direction concerning workplace health and safety
- May choose not to wear safety equipment because they think it's not "cool"

Employers: What are my health and safety responsibilities in the workplace?

One of an employer's most important responsibilities is to ensure that workers are adequately trained in safe work procedures and properly supervised when carrying out their duties. Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, "the employer has the legal responsibility to ensure that every worker receives adequate training." The employer must also follow up to see that the supervisor is carrying out all required training.

As the employer, you are responsible for ensuring that all your workers can do their jobs without unnecessary risk. Keep in mind that young and new workers are often inexperienced and unable to recognize hazards. Many won't ask questions about workplace safety for fear of looking incompetent or simply because they don't know what to ask. The procedures you have in place for workplace health and safety should take into account these and other facts about young workers and new workers.

- Know and comply with workplace health and safety regulations that apply to your workplace.
- Create a workplace culture that encourages young and new workers to ask questions about any health and safety concerns they may have.
- Involve supervisors and experienced workers in identifying potential health and safety problems and in developing prevention programs to eliminate those hazards.
- Give supervisors, young workers, and new workers all the training they need to do their jobs and to recognize hazards.

- Provide the required safety gear and protective clothing. (Workers are responsible for providing their own clothing to protect themselves against the natural elements, including general purpose work gloves, safety footwear, and safety headgear.)
- Evaluate equipment that young workers and new workers might be required to operate to ensure that it is safe for their use. Make sure they know how to use equipment safely.
- Make sure that young workers and new workers are appropriately supervised to prevent injuries and exposure to hazardous materials. Create an environment where "safe" behaviour is rewarded and recognized in your workplace.
- Provide managers and supervisors with knowledge of how to train new and young workers. Check back with them frequently to ensure they are following up with new staff to ensure that questions are being answered and to observe if the work is being done safely.

Remember . . .

Safety is smart business. A safe workplace, with employees trained in safe work procedures, is a more productive workplace.

Health and Safety Responsibility Quiz

True or False?

1. _____ A young worker is most likely to rely upon his or her employer for training and direction concerning health and safety.
2. _____ A supervisor cannot be held liable for a workplace accident unless he or she holds the official title of "supervisor."
3. _____ Upon promotion, supervisors always receive training in health and safety in addition to supervisory training.
4. _____ Supervisors must take all reasonable care to protect the well-being of employees or co-workers.
5. _____ Supervisors can be disciplined for refusing to direct workers to perform tasks they have reasonable cause to believe are dangerous.
6. _____ Most young worker injuries occur within a worker's first six months on the job.
7. _____ Young men are more likely to be injured on the job than any other group of workers.

8. _____ Workers do not have the legal right to refuse to perform any work they think unsafe.
9. _____ Two of the most important factors in preventing young worker injuries are training and supervision.
10. _____ Employers are not responsible for assigning responsibility, accountability, and authority to supervisory staff.

Health and Safety Responsibility Quiz

— Answer Key —

1. **False** — A young worker will most likely rely on his or her immediate *supervisor*.
2. **False** — A supervisor need not have the title "supervisor" to be held liable. Anyone who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties is considered a supervisor.
3. **False** — Supervisors usually do not receive additional health and safety training upon promotion.
4. **True**
5. **False** — Supervisors have the right to refuse to direct workers to perform work they consider unsafe. Employers cannot discipline a worker for refusing unsafe work because this is a discriminatory action and prohibited under the *Workers Compensation Act*.
6. **True**
7. **True**
8. **False** — Workers DO have the legal right to refuse to perform any work they think unsafe. Employers cannot discipline a worker for refusing unsafe work because this is a discriminatory action and prohibited under the *Workers Compensation Act*.

9. **True**

10. **False** — Employers must assign responsibility, accountability, and authority to supervisory staff.

Other young worker injury prevention videos

'Joe Who?'

This WorkSafeBC video features a peer-to-peer play written and performed by students at Matthew McNair Secondary School in Richmond. They put a teen spin on the young worker's world and what on-the-job injuries do — to those actually hurt, and to their friends, family, and co-workers.



'Lost Youth'

This award-winning video tells the stories of four lives changed forever — teenage B.C. workers who suffered serious injuries that led

to amputations and paralysis. None of them got the training needed to deal with the hazards of their jobs.

Graphic accident recreations are intercut with emotional interviews with the young people and their parents . . . talking about what went wrong, how they felt, and the steps on the road to recovery.



To find out more about these videos and to order your copy visit

<http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources-YoungWorkers.asp>

**For more information and
resources on health and safety for**

- **workers • supervisors**
- **employers • educators**
- **parents • and others**

**visit the WorkSafeBC young worker
web site:**

<http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Home.asp>

**Or call the WorkSafeBC Information Line
at 604 276-3100,
or toll-free at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233).**

**KEEPING WORKERS SAFE
– it's up to all of us!**

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