

You have a right to a healthy and safe workplace.

Are you starting a new job this summer?

By Jesse Marchand

Almost 20 percent of workplace incidents involving new workers occur during their first week on the job. If you, or someone you know is entering the workforce this summer, the following tips can help you begin to navigate health and safety at your new workplace.

Starting a new job can be exciting and intimidating all at once. You may be embarking on a new career, trying to pick up some money over the summer, or taking on a co-op. No matter how short or how long your stay with your employer, staying healthy and safe should be the top priority for both of you. On average, 14 young workers suffer a serious injury every week. Serious injuries can have serious considerations for your life: from broken bones to long-term hospital stays, a serious injury could derail your life plans.

Your rights at work

Both you and your employer have responsibilities

under the *Workers Compensation Act* to keep your workplace healthy and safe. All workers in B.C. have three basic health and safety rights:

- 1 The right to know about hazards in the workplace.
- 2 The right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace.
- 3 The right to refuse unsafe work without being punished or fired.

Five ways your employer can help ensure your health and safety

You've found a place where you'd like work. How do you know it's safe? Here are five things your employer needs to do to help ensure your health and safety.

- 1 **Register with WorkSafeBC.** All employers in B.C. need to register with WorkSafeBC. Anyone can find out if an employer is registered by obtaining a clearance letter through worksafebc.com. The clearance letter will let you know if the employer is registered and in good standing with WorkSafeBC.

2 Have an occupational health and safety program. Your employer needs to be aware of all the hazards in the workplace, and those hazards should be communicated to you. This includes physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, and psychological hazards such as stress, harassment, and violence.

Knowing the hazards isn't enough; the employer is also responsible for correcting unsafe conditions and mitigating those hazards. All equipment and work processes should have safety procedures that are posted somewhere you can see.

This is all part of an occupational health and safety program, which can be formal or informal depending on the size of the workplace. If the workplace has 20 or more employees, it should have a joint health and safety committee. A joint committee is made up of management and staff. If there are between 10 and 19 workers, there should be at least one dedicated health and safety representative. A workplace with an active representative or committee is one that's proactive about safety, rather than reactive.

3 Provide training. The employer needs to provide training and orientation specific to the workplace before you start work. A workplace with a comprehensive health and safety plan will have extensive safety training that covers a wide variety of topics. This training includes, but is not limited to: health and safety information for the specific worksite and work tasks, rights and responsibilities of the employer and workers, who can answer questions, and the location of first aid facilities.

4 Provide supervision. You'll want to know who your direct supervisor will be and how that supervision will take place. An employer with a good health and safety program will have a mentoring or similar program for new and young workers. Your mentor can show you the ropes and answer any questions you might have.

5 Have a plan in place if someone gets injured at work. Your employer should have a procedures in place to report and respond to injuries. From how first aid is administered and what equipment is on site to who you report to, it's important that your new employer communicates these processes to you.

For more information

This is just a starting point for health and safety considerations at the workplace. The following resources are available on worksafebc.com for educators, new and young workers, and employers:

For educators

- [Student Work Placement: Guide for assessing workplace health and safety](#)

For new and young workers

- [Listen to Your Gut](#) website
- [Getting a Job](#) brochure
- [Hidden Hazards in the Workplace: A Young Worker's Guide](#)

For employers

- [Support for Employers: Training and Orientation for Young and New Workers](#)
- [Tools for Training Young and New Workers](#) ☺



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