

Summer job safety important for youth

By Donna Campbell
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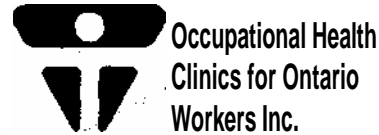
It's spring, and young workers throughout Ontario will be getting up each morning and going off to work.

It surprised me how young some of them are.

Many of them don't just have summer jobs. They go to school, college, or university and work many hours a week on a regular basis throughout the year.

Young workers want or have to work for many reasons. They want their independence, they want some new clothes, their friends have jobs, they have an education to pay for and the list goes on.

Whatever the reason they are working, they have made it clear to me that they are not willing to be injured, get ill or die from the job



they are being hired to do.

In my discussions with young workers, I have found that some are not aware of the potentially life-threatening hazards present in their workplace, while others have surprised me with the extent of their awareness of the hazards. •

Young workers are often aware or concerned of the dangers, but are uncomfortable or afraid to speak out.

Here are some the reasons they gave:

- They wanted to impress a potential employer;
- They would be released;

- It's only a summer job that lasts for a couple of months;
- They didn't know how to approach the employer or supervisor
- Their parents would be disappointed if they lost their job or made the boss think they were lazy.

I discovered that informing them of their rights and the legislation that covers and protects them on the job is only part of the tools young workers need to protect themselves from the hazards in the workplace.

I have enjoyed hours of brainstorming with young workers exploring ways in which they might communicate to their employer that they wanted to assist in resolving safety hazards in their workplace.

Their understanding of the dangerous situations and their ideas as to how those situations might be resolved were astounding.

Young workers have taught me a lot. All I had to do was listen to their solutions to their safety concerns stemming from the work-places they work in.

We can teach them their rights, responsibilities and the legislation that covers them in workplace, but we must also listen to them.

If you are the parent of a young worker listen to what they telling you. Ask them whether they are afraid when performing the duties of their job. Ask them if they think you would be disappointed in them if they were to quit a job because they felt it was unsafe.

The answers might surprise you.

• Donna Campbell is the executive director of Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. Read OHCOW's column monthly in The Sudbury Star.