

“Work Smart Know Your Rights”

Are you a young worker? Here are a few things to consider other than the extra cash...

It has been reported that injuries among young workers, most commonly occur within the first month on the job (Industrial Accident Prevention Association & Workers Health & Safety Centre).

With seasonal jobs in high demand, students are seeking employment; the three most common occupational categories include retail, supermarket and restaurant industries.

Most young workers are not aware of the dangers in their workplace. As statistics reveal: 50,700 workers have been injured on the job and lost time from work in 2006 (The Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada). Of those, tragically, 51 workers have lost their lives on the job.

The primary reasons why so many young workers have been injured on the job are due to lack of training they receive, a reduced amount of working experience and a lack of knowledge to keep them safe.

According to a recent survey, 46% of young workers reported that they had never received safety or equipment training.

As a result of the lack of training, the five most common causes of injuries include: being struck against or struck by an object, overexertion, falls, bodily reactions excluding over exertions or repetitive motions, and being caught in or compressed by equipment or objects. In addition, Ontario statistics reveal that 2 percent of injured teenagers and 3 percent of injured young adults have been hurt severely enough to be left with a permanent impairment.

Education is important; however, it is rarely enough to prevent injuries within the workplace.

It is the law for employers to properly train their employees before they start work. In addition, it is advised that employers remove any hazards and install safe guards on all machinery, enforce all occupational health and safety regulations and provide supervision to all employees.

Employees should know that they have rights: the right to know, the right to participate and the right to refuse unsafe work. In addition, it is advised that employees follow the proper safety procedures including; wearing the required personal protective equipment (PPE), recognize and report all hazards; as well as, be aware of first aid procedures and locations.

Parents of young workers can also play a positive role in prevention by reassuring that they will support their young person's decision to challenge a boss, supervisor or co-worker if they are ever asked to do something unsafe. Parents can also advise their young worker on the importance of reporting all injuries no matter how minimal the event may seem. Furthermore, parents can also act as role models by talking about their own safety experiences.

So remember, ask questions, know your rights, get trained and be safe!

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