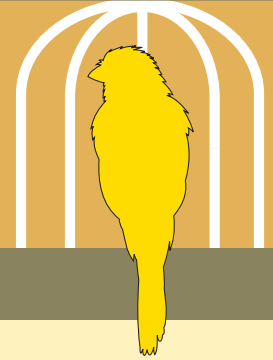


New and Young Workers



HEALTH AND SAFETY FACT SHEET

CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

New and young workers are more likely to be injured during the first six months of employment than at any other time. Between 2007 and 2009, 124 workers between the ages of 15 and 24 years died from work-related injuries. Almost 34,000 young workers were hurt badly enough to miss work.¹

The key to protecting new and young workers is to educate them on their rights and the questions they can ask to stay safe.

Why are new and young workers at increased risk?

All people are at particular risk of injury in the first six months of a job as they may be unaware of existing or potential risks. There is a direct relationship between the number of years experience and the number of injuries that happen on the job.

- New and young workers may lack experience and may be required to perform tasks they are not familiar with.
- They are often unaware of their rights, and may be afraid to raise concerns about health and safety issues for fear that they might lose their job.
- They are often given the more tedious and even dangerous jobs that no one wants to do.
- They may be eager to impress or please people they work with.
- They may not have reached physical maturity and therefore lack the strength demanded.

Other job-related factors include lack of training and supervision, unsafe equipment, stressful conditions and working too quickly.

Knowing your rights

All provinces and the federal jurisdiction have an occupational health and safety act and regulations that provide fundamental rights to Canadian workers while they are performing their jobs. The three basic rights are:

- The right to refuse unsafe work.
- The right to participate in health and safety activities through workplace health and safety committees, or as a worker health and safety representative.
- The right to know, or the right to be informed about actual and potential dangers in the workplace.

Questions to ask your new employer

Ask your new employer to give you a health and safety orientation to your worksite. Here are some particular questions to ask:

- 1. What are the hazards of my job?**
By law, your employer must tell you about hazards at the workplace. Also, not all hazards affect you right away. Exposure to high noise levels over time can lead to hearing loss. Working with radiation, dusts and chemicals can increase your risk of diseases like cancer. Your employer must tell you about these hidden hazards as well.
- 2. What training will I receive?**
Everyone needs training and their job duties or tasks explained to them. Your employer must make sure you have the knowledge to safely do your work. This includes being told about all hazards in your workplace. For example, if you are required to work

with or near any hazardous chemicals, your employer will have to provide you with the appropriate training.

3. Is there safety equipment I'll be expected to wear?

Depending on the type of work you do, certain personal protective equipment (PPE) may be required. If PPE is necessary, you need to know what it is, how and when to use it.

4. What do I do if I get hurt?

The law says your employer must provide on-site first aid equipment. Most employers are required to have people present with first aid training, however you should be aware of the procedures to follow if you or someone else is hurt on the job.

5. Who do I go to with safety concerns?

When something happens at work, and you don't think it's been handled correctly, or you see something that doesn't seem safe, don't be afraid to report it. Typically you would start by speaking to your supervisor about these concerns. CUPE members with a safety concern that their supervisor won't address or take seriously should speak to their union steward or a member of their workplace health and safety committee.

Is your workplace unsafe?

Though it is the primary responsibility of your employer to provide a healthy and safe workplace, you must not be complacent. Being aware of what's going on around you may help determine whether you should be concerned about health and safety in your workplace. Here are some signs that your workplace may be unsafe:

- Other workers are being injured on the job.
- You're working without direct supervision.
- You haven't been trained properly.
- Equipment is unguarded or broken.
- Containers of chemicals aren't labelled.
- Safety shortcuts are used to save time or money.
- Poor housekeeping and maintenance (like slippery floors, frayed electrical cords) are present and not fixed when reported.

Ways to protect yourself at work

- Learn about your rights and obligations under the applicable legislation in your jurisdiction.
- Take advantage of the training you are given, learn to do the job safely, and don't perform tasks or use equipment that you have not been trained to use.
- Think the job through: know what to do when there is an injury or emergency.
- Get help, especially if you have to lift something heavy or are not sure how to do a task that may be dangerous.
- Wear the safety gear that is required to do your job safely.
- Tell your supervisor if you see any hazards or violations.
- Talk to your coworkers, friends and even your family about your job. They might know something you don't!

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