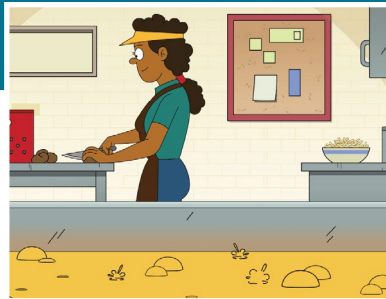


# GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS OF YOUNG WORKERS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	<b>3</b>
Employer Responsibilities .....	<b>4</b>
Young Workers .....	<b>5</b>
Worker Rights and Responsibilities .....	<b>7</b>
Safety Orientation .....	<b>10</b>
Checklist .....	<b>11</b>
Training .....	<b>13</b>
Hazard Awareness .....	<b>16</b>
Basic Hazard Assessment .....	<b>18</b>
Importance of Supervision .....	<b>19</b>
Employer Resources .....	<b>21</b>



## INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this guide, chances are you have young workers in your employ. You are likely already aware that as an employer, you have a moral and legal responsibility to protect all your workers, whatever their age or experience. What you may be just discovering is how challenging it can be to fulfill those responsibilities when dealing with young workers. A combination of inexperience, eagerness to look competent, and a reluctance to speak up makes young workers particularly vulnerable to injury. This guide has been developed to help you deal with this workplace reality. In it you will find information on the following:

- ✓ Your legal responsibilities as an employer
- ✓ What young workers bring to the workplace
- ✓ Rights and responsibilities of workers
- ✓ The value of a safety orientation
- ✓ Effective ways to provide training
- ✓ Encouraging hazard awareness
- ✓ The importance of supervision
- ✓ Resources for employers



**Young workers include workers between the ages of 15 and 24.**

## EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

As an employer on Prince Edward Island, you are legally responsible for providing all of your workers with a safe workplace. This means adhering to health and safety regulations, providing appropriate and adequate supervision, and ensuring that all workers – especially young workers – have the necessary training and equipment to do their jobs safely.

Part 12 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* sets out duties of employers, and states:

- (1) An employer shall ensure
  - (a) that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect the occupational health and safety of persons at or near the workplace;
  - (b) that any item, device, material, equipment or machinery provided for the use of workers at a workplace is properly maintained, and is properly equipped with the safety features or devices, as recommended by the manufacturer or required by the regulations;
  - (c) that such information, instruction, training, supervision, and facilities are provided as are necessary to ensure the occupational health and safety of the workers;
  - (d) that workers and supervisors are familiar with occupational health or safety hazards at the workplace;
  - (e) that workers are made familiar with the proper use of all safety features or devices, equipment and clothing required for their protection; and
  - (f) that the employer's undertaking is conducted so that workers are not exposed to occupational health or safety hazards as a result of the undertaking.

**You have direct responsibility for the safety of everyone in your workplace, as well as the potential to directly influence the health and safety attitudes and habits of the youth in your midst. What a great opportunity to affect change in your community for now and for the future!**



## YOUNG WORKERS

Youth can be an exciting time filled with enthusiasm, creativity, high energy, adventure, and fun. These are admirable qualities, and ones we would not want to discourage in our youth. These very qualities, however, can sometimes lead young workers into dangerous workplace situations. Being creative while using a meat slicer; being adventurous while driving a lawn tractor; or being absolutely certain one can operate a fork lift, having never been on one before, are all one-way tickets to workplace injury. One of the challenges, when dealing with young workers\*, is to balance that youthful spirit of fun and adventure with a healthy respect for workplace hazards, and all the things that could – and do – go wrong. Hazards exist everywhere in the workplace and many of the controls put in place to keep workers safe involve following very specific directions, known as safe work procedures.

**One of the challenges, when dealing with young workers, is to balance that youthful spirit of fun and adventure with a healthy respect for workplace hazards, and all the things that could – and do – go wrong.**

If young workers are not accustomed to rigid adherence to procedure, they may not understand that there are good reasons to be systematic and methodical. They need to know that when they deviate from safe work procedures by taking shortcuts there arises real potential for serious harm.

Youth can also be a time of inexperience and uncertainty, a time of feeling powerless about one's situation, and reluctant to ask questions or to question authority. Encouraging young workers to speak up for themselves – when it is not always in their nature to do so – is another one of the challenges you face as an employer. Silence in the workplace can lead to danger, especially if young workers don't speak up to ask for what they need.

A simple statement, such as, "I don't understand; please explain that again" is often very difficult for a young worker to make. Instead, the worker might think to themselves, "I don't really know how to run this thing, but I'll look stupid if I ask" or "I forget what he said to do next but I'll figure it out."

*\* Please note that many of the points discussed here about young workers apply to new workers, as well. In cases where workers are new to a position, new to an organization, or perhaps even new to a culture, it is important that an employer consider how special circumstances can add to the challenges of taking on a new job.*



When you are able to create an environment where workers are encouraged to ask questions and participate in health and safety matters, the likelihood of injury in the workplace can be significantly reduced. This includes:

- Making yourself available during young worker orientation sessions
- Being approachable and accessible
- Introducing young workers to key safety people in your organization (Health & Safety Manager, JOSH committee members, or health and safety representatives)
- Pairing up young workers with experienced, safety-conscious workers who will encourage their questions, and answer them
- Personally encouraging young workers to report health and safety problems they may encounter, and responding promptly when they do
- Regularly inviting young workers to come forward with ideas and suggestions, and thanking them when they do
- Making health and safety a part of all workplace communications
- Being aware of your body language, the tone of your voice, and other non-verbal signals when communicating with young workers
- Thinking back to when you were a young worker to consider what was helpful to you



**Encouraging your workers to speak up for themselves – when it is not always in their nature to do so – is another one of the challenges you face as an employer.**

## WORKER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone in the workplace, from a business owner to a newly hired worker has a shared responsibility to work together to prevent injury and illness in the workplace. This shared responsibility for workplace safety is known as the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) and is the fundamental principle upon which the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* is based. For this to work successfully young workers need to know about their responsibilities for safety on the job; they also need to know what they can expect employers and supervisors to provide in terms of a safe work environment. It is important, as well, that young workers be informed of the three basic rights granted to all workers – regardless of age or experience – by law. These rights are as follows:

- The **RIGHT TO KNOW** means knowing what is needed in order to do the job safely; this would include the right to receive training needed to identify and avoid all hazards that may exist in the workplace, what to do if there is an incident, where to locate first aid supplies, what work areas are off limits, and how to properly use personal protective equipment.
- The **RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE** means participating in decisions related to health and safety in the workplace; this would include participating in a formal way (as a member of the Joint Occupational Safety and Health Committee, or as an Occupational Health and Safety representative), as well as by asking questions, making suggestions, and bringing up safety concerns.
- The **RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK** means that a worker may, by following a process outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, refuse to do any task that they feel is hazardous to their health or safety. Under the law a worker cannot be punished for exercising their right to refuse unsafe work.



Along with the three basic rights, as outlined above, workers have important health and safety responsibilities. Part 16 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* sets out the duties of a worker and states:

16. (1) A worker, while at work, shall
- (a) take every reasonable precaution to protect the worker's own occupational health and safety and that of other persons at or near the workplace;
  - (b) cooperate with the employer and with the other workers to protect the worker's own occupational health and safety and that of other persons at or near the workplace;
  - (c) wear or use such individual protective equipment as is required by this Act and the regulations;
  - (d) consult and cooperate with the committee or representative, if any;
  - (e) cooperate with any person performing a duty or exercising a power conferred by this Act or the regulations; and
  - (f) comply with this Act and the regulations.
- (2) Where a worker believes that any item, device, material, equipment or machinery, condition or aspect of the workplace is or may be dangerous to the worker's occupational health or safety or that of other persons at or near the workplace, the worker
- (a) shall immediately report it to a supervisor;
  - (b) shall, where the matter is not remedied to the worker's satisfaction, report it to the committee or the representative, if any; and
  - (c) may, where the matter is not remedied to the worker's satisfaction after the worker reports it in accordance with clauses (a) and (b), report it to an officer.





Making your workers aware of these duties or responsibilities, in a way that is meaningful to them, will be well worth the time it takes to do so. Ways of doing this include the following:

- Refer workers to Part 16 in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (hard copy or WCB website)
- Discuss each duty in the context of your workplace, citing specific examples
- Engage workers in suggesting examples of precautions they can take to protect their own health and safety and that of other persons
- Discuss procedures for reporting hazards or unsafe conditions, assuring workers that their concerns will be taken seriously
- Discuss the Internal Responsibility System, so workers know **everyone** has responsibilities for health and safety in the workplace
- Make it a point to comment whenever you see a worker actively fulfilling these OHS duties in the workplace
- Make health and safety a part of all workplace communications including posters, signage, toolbox talks, and everyday conversation



Make it a point to comment whenever you see a worker actively fulfilling these OHS duties in the workplace.

## SAFETY ORIENTATION

When hiring young workers it is important that you orient them to your workplace before you expect them to be responsible for the work you hired them to do. A critical part of this workplace orientation will be the Safety Orientation, when you introduce new workers to the many aspects of safety in your workplace. Included in this orientation would be such things as:

- Your company's safety policy
- Your company's safety program
- Personal protective equipment
- Responsibilities and processes for reporting injury incidents and near misses
- Identification and control of hazards
- First aid details
- Emergency evacuation details
- Any other safety concerns specific to your organization

The checklist on the following two pages may be used as a guide for your Safety Orientation. Copy this one, or develop something similar, adapting it to suit your organization and your particular needs. Use the checklist as a guide for discussion, and document that you covered important safety points.

Consider repeating the whole process once the new worker has been on the job for three weeks. It is amazing what new learning can be gained when a lesson that has been already delivered to a new worker, is repeated after the learner has some experience!



**Pointing out hazards (extremely hot oil, for example) and outlining safe work procedures is an important part of the Safety Orientation.**

**This checklist is a guideline for conducting a safety orientation for workers new to a company or department. Once completed and signed by both the supervisor and the worker, it serves as documentation that a proper orientation has taken place.**

Worker’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Worker Started \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Orientation \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Giving the Orientation \_\_\_\_\_

*Both the person delivering and attending the orientation should initial each section as it is covered.*

### EXPLANATION OF THE COMPANY SAFETY PROGRAM

- Orientation
- Training
- Safety meetings
- Incident investigation and reporting
- Function of the safety committee (if there is one)
- Worker rights

### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Hard hats
- Safety glasses
- High visibility vests
- Appropriate protective gloves
- Respiratory protective equipment
- Protective footwear
- Other protective equipment specific to job

### FIRST AID SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

- Obtaining first aid treatment
- Location of first aid stations
- Location and names of staff with first aid training

### REVIEW HAZARDS SPECIFIC TO JOB DUTIES

- Physical hazards (electricity, extremes of temperature, noise, vibration etc.)
- Chemical hazards (cleaning products paints and finishes, pesticides, etc.)
- Biological hazards (bacteria, viruses, fungi, mold, etc.)
- Ergonomic hazards (poor work station design, heavy lifting, awkward positions, repetitive movements, etc.)
- Safety hazards (untidy work stations, slip and trip hazards, impairment, etc.)
- Psychological hazards (workplace stress, workplace harassment, etc.)



### LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPORTING INJURY INCIDENTS:

- When to report an injury
- How to report an injury
- To whom an injury should be reported
- Filing an incident report form
- Reporting near misses

### EMERGENCY PLAN

- Exit locations and evacuation routes
- Use of firefighting equipment  
*(extinguisher, hose)*
- Specific procedures *(medical, chemical, fire, etc.)*

### VEHICLE SAFETY CHECK PROCEDURE

- Safety and speed regulations
- Operating license appropriate for vehicle

### PERSONAL WORK HABITS

- Safe work procedures
- Smoking policy
- Good housekeeping practices
- Proper lifting techniques

### OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY ITEMS

Add any other health and safety items the worker needs to know about your workplace, such as security procedures for working alone. You may need to provide education and training for these at another time.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*The signatures below are evidence that the topics contained in this checklist have been discussed to the satisfaction of the worker and supervisor. Signing indicates that both parties accept responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy workplace.*

Supervisor’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Worker’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## TRAINING

Once a worker has received a basic orientation to the workplace – including discussion about workplace hazards, worker rights and responsibilities, and the duties of employers – the time has come for specific job training. The time you spend on training young workers is time well spent towards the health

and safety of those workers and others around them. Not only is it wise to provide ample time on training, it is your legal responsibility as an employer to ensure that information, instruction, training, supervision and facilities are provided as are necessary to ensure the occupational health and safety of the workers.

**Not only is it wise to provide ample time on training, it is your legal responsibility as an employer...**

If you are not doing the training yourself, consider the importance of the job you have entrusted to someone else in your organization. Provide the support these supervisors/managers need to do their jobs well, including ample training opportunities in how to train, how to communicate, and how to supervise. Consider the value of attending at least part of the training session. Your presence will provide a visible reminder to your workers – both young workers as well as management – of the importance you place on training. Your presence will also provide you with an excellent opportunity to see your supervisors/managers interact with those under their supervision. Being present for at least part of the training session will give you a reference point for your own future interactions with young workers.

Specifically, young workers need to be trained in how to:

- ✓ Perform tasks safely
- ✓ Operate machines and equipment safely
- ✓ Use and maintain required personal protective equipment
- ✓ Follow safe work procedures

It may also be necessary to explain to young workers what tasks they should NOT do without specific training or qualifications, such as operating certain pieces of machinery or handling chemicals.

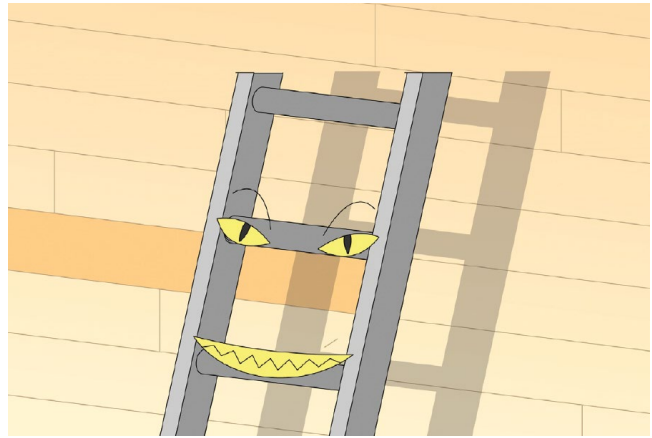


Keep written records of the training that is provided to each worker, by documenting:

- ✓ who did the training
- ✓ what training was done
- ✓ when the training was done
- ✓ that the trainer feels confident the training is complete
- ✓ that the worker feels confident the training is complete

It is certain that workers will learn one way or another, either by making mistakes and being corrected (or injured), or by gradually catching on to what they see others doing. Neither of these approaches to training is acceptable in fulfilling your duties as an employer. The only responsible approach to training is through a systematic planned process which prepares workers to do their jobs safely and efficiently. This training should include techniques to develop information and knowledge, as well as the necessary hands-on training, guided practice, and supervision.

One method of training which has been proven over many years to be successful uses four steps, as follows: motivate, tell and show, test, and check.



**Workers will “learn” whether or not you provide the training. Make sure they learn the right way the first time.**

**These four steps – motivate, tell and show, test, and check – ensure that many important aspects of training are covered, and set the learner up for safety, success and efficiency with the task.**



It is important to regard training as an ongoing process. There are many times in a workplace when specific training is required, and it is up to you, as the employer, to be mindful of this. It is not only new workers who need training, but also experienced workers when new equipment or new procedures have been brought into the workplace, when workers have been reassigned to new tasks or locations, or when workplace conditions have changed in a significant way. When you regard training as a valued everyday commitment, as well as a legal responsibility, the benefits to the health and well-being of your workers – and your organization will be significant.

## MOTIVATE

- Find out what the learner already knows
- Emphasize the importance of the task
- Build learner's interest

## TELL AND SHOW

- Explain how the task is to be done
- Demonstrate how the task is to be done
- Stress key points



**There are many times in a workplace when specific training is required, and it is up to you, as the employer, to be mindful of this.**

## TEST

- Have learner explain how the task is to be done
- Have learner demonstrate how the task is to be done
- Guide, correct, repeat/review directions, as needed
- Use positive reinforcement where appropriate

## CHECK

- Ensure supports are in place, as needed
- Check back often to answer questions, review key points, and monitor progress

## HAZARD AWARENESS

As every employer knows, a hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm to a person or property. Understanding and controlling those hazards pays off in fewer and less severe injuries, and in cost savings for the organization. As an employer, it is your legal responsibility, to ensure that workers are informed about hazards in the workplace, and what controls are in place to keep workers safe.

Beyond the legal obligation, it is good practice, and an excellent investment in health and safety for you to offer your workers training in hazard assessment.

Part 12 (d) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* states:

“An employer shall ensure

- (d) that workers and supervisors are **familiar with** occupational health or safety **hazards at the workplace.**”

Beyond the legal obligation, it is good practice and an excellent investment in health and safety for you to offer your workers training in hazard assessment. Young workers, particularly, are at risk for workplace injury, due, in part, to their inexperience in the workplace and their lack of awareness about hazards. Even the most obvious hazards may have to be pointed out to them until they become more adept at identifying hazards on their own. For basic information on hazards, direct young workers to check out ([What You Don't Know](#)), in the Young Worker section of our website.

Encourage workers to categorize hazards according to the following six categories:

- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Chemical
- ✓ Biological
- ✓ Ergonomic
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Psychological





Train workers to understand the categories in a general sense, as well as specific to their workplace. On page 18 is a template for a basic hazard assessment, using their new workplace and the hazards found there. Completing and reviewing this with young workers will expand their thinking about hazards, which will encourage them to consider important questions associated with hazard assessment such as “What could happen?” and “What corrective action should be taken?”

TYPE OF HAZARD	WHAT COULD HAPPEN?	WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN?
Loud Noise	Worker could sustain hearing loss	Worker should wear hearing protection adequate to lower noise levels to safe levels

Point out to young workers the five basic elements in any workplace, another way of thinking about hazards and where to find them. The five elements are:

- 1. people
- 2. the environment they work in
- 3. the processes they use
- 4. the materials they work with
- 5. the equipment or tools they use

Hazards will always involve one or more of these elements, so each should be looked at in turn.

When you encourage young workers to watch for hazards wherever they are – and to report them immediately – you are empowering them to own their safety and that of their coworkers. When you give them guidelines and categories to use when watching for hazards, you are giving them the right tools to do the job safely.



## BASIC HAZARD ASSESSMENT

TYPE OF HAZARD	WHAT COULD HAPPEN?	WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN?
<b>PHYSICAL</b>		
<b>CHEMICAL</b>		
<b>BIOLOGICAL</b>		
<b>ERGONOMIC</b>		
<b>SAFETY</b>		
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>		



## IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISION

Workers between the ages of 15 and 24 are at greater risk of being injured on the job. Although this can be attributed to factors such as inexperience and lack of training, inadequate supervision can play a big role. Part 12(c) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* states:

“An employer shall ensure

- (c) that such information, instruction, training, **supervision** and facilities are **provided** as are necessary to ensure the occupational health and safety of the workers.”

Supervision is really that fourth and last step of the training process (motivate, tell and show, test, and check). This is the step where the checking is done – on a regular, ongoing basis – in order to:

- ✓ Give extra support and direction, as needed
- ✓ Reinforce safe work practices
- ✓ Catch and immediately correct mistakes and short cuts
- ✓ Enforce the use of required personal protective equipment
- ✓ Take note of and address anything that may have been overlooked in the initial training

Supervision of a worker begins as soon as they are encouraged to try out a new process or a piece of equipment, and continues the entire time that worker is employed by you. It stands to reason that the need for supervision will diminish as the worker gains experience, skill, and confidence. Keep in mind, however, that the supervision of young 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 competent before leaving them to perform the work alone.



The supervision of young workers requires a higher level of due diligence because of their general lack of experience.

It is important to note that while the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* states it is the employer’s responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers, it is usually the supervisor who is assigned this duty on a day to day basis. A supervisor has the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all workers under their supervision. Many young workers won’t ask questions about workplace health and safety for fear of looking incompetent or simply because they don’t know what to ask. They are more likely to rely on their immediate supervisor for health and safety training and direction than older more experienced workers. Providing adequate supervision is perhaps the single most important duty a supervisor has.

Given the responsibility of supervisors\* (who may, themselves, be young workers), it stands to reason that you choose these workers with care, and provide them with all the training and support needed to fulfill supervisory duties.

*\* Please note: A supervisor is defined as any person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties – even if they don’t have the title of supervisor. As an employer, make sure you are aware of the duties you are asking of your workers, especially in regard to supervising the work of others.*



**As an employer, make sure you are aware of the duties you are asking of your workers, especially in regards to supervising the work of others.**

## EMPLOYER RESOURCES

At the Workers Compensation Board of PEI, we have many resources (multimedia, print materials, OHS staff consultants) available to employers. Information about all of our resources may be found on our website, at [www.wcb.pe.ca](http://www.wcb.pe.ca)

Check out the Young Worker section of our website to find resources, and to learn about programs and initiatives designed to get young workers talking and learning about their workplace safety.



If you have young workers, you can help keep them safe today – and in their future jobs. Because what they don't know **CAN** hurt them.



DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE TO PEI OHS  
LEGISLATION APP TODAY!



**If you need help with a concern involving the safety of your workplace and your workers, please call us at Occupational Health and Safety, 902-368-5697, or [check out our website](http://www.wcb.pe.ca).**



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