# New/Young Worker Safety – Checklist

## PREAMBLE

Young/new workers have high rates of job-related injury. These injuries are often the result of the many hazards present in the places they typically work, such as sharp knives and slippery floors in restaurants. Limited or no prior work experience and a lack of safety training also contribute to high injury rates. Middle and high school workers may be at increased risk for injury since they may not have the strength or cognitive ability needed to perform certain job duties.

### Fast Stats:

- In 2018, there were about 19.4 million workers under the age of 24. These workers represented 12% of the total workforce.
- In 2017, 377 workers under the age of 24 died from work-related injuries.
- In 2017, there were 22 deaths to workers under 18 years of age.
- In 2017, the incidence rate for non-fatal injuries for workers, ages 16–19, was 112.1 per 10,000 full-time employees (FTE) and 96.3 per 10,000 FTE for workers, ages 20–24.
- In 2017, the rate of work-related injuries treated in emergency departments for workers, ages 15–19, was 1.25 times greater than the rate for workers 25 years of age and older.

## New Employees Safety Talk

New employees often are **viewed as a liability** to a company or jobsite when it comes to working safely. One study found that employees with less than one month on the job are **three times more likely** to suffer a lost time injury than employees with more than

a year on the job. While new employees are at higher risk at getting injured, much of that depends on the other employees and the work site itself.

## Benefits of New Employees

A new employee often wants to follow all the safety rules especially if the majority of people onsite are following the rules as well. If a new employee observes the other employees working safely they will often want to do the same. New employees also have a fresh set of eyes towards hazards onsite and may have experiences of unique lessons learned from previous jobs. That being said, measures should still be taken to ensure these employees are able to and do perform work safely.

While training new workers is essential, this is not always enough by itself. To make a real reduction in injury, you need to do more—much more. This means developing a comprehensive health and safety program with clear, measurable goals. You also need to get senior management buy-in. Without their help, your program is likely to flop.

Employers need to allow employees to participate in making the workplace safer. Opening up communication channels between workers and management on safety issues is the first step. You also need to find out what safety issues exist at the worksite and eliminate them, showing that safety is your top priority. Near miss reporting also helps improve safety on site and involves all workers in the safety process.

Communicating effectively with workers is the goal of safety training. By repeating job task safety, you can ensure you get the most out of all your employees, reducing the risk of accidents. With GoContractor's solution you can start the process well in advance of an employee's first day, customizing any training to their needs. You can also create online paths so that workers complete forms and training relevant to their position in their language choice. This effort boosts comprehension and learning, while reducing injuries, along with costs.

Additional training methods to incorporate, include mentoring by experienced workers; hosting apprentice programs; issuing clear, short, and concise written procedures; and providing worker practice time.

Workers of all ages can be injured at work, but young and new workers may be more at risk. Injuries can result from inadequate training, orientation, and supervision; inexperience; and lack of awareness of workplace rights and responsibilities. Whatever your role, we have tools and resources that can help reduce the risk.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation defines a "young worker" as any worker under age 25. A "new worker" can be any age and includes those who are new to the workplace or location, or facing new hazards.

## THE RISKS

Typical reasons why young and new workers are injured include:

- Inexperience
- Lack of training, orientation, and supervision
- Lack of understanding of their workplace
- Lack of preparation for the workplace
- Exposure to more dangerous jobs
- Hesitancy to ask questions

## PREVENTION

### Preventive Procedures and Protocols for all Employees

- Conduct periodic inspections and frequently remind equipment operators to use seat belts provided and never try to jump from an overturning sit-down type forklift.
- Check travel routes used by forklifts are free of obstacles and other unsafe conditions.
- Establish work policies that comply with child labor laws prohibiting youths less than 18 years of age from performing hazardous work, including operating power-driven hoisting equipment such as forklifts. All employees should be aware

of this policy.

- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive written safety program for all workers which includes training in hazard recognition and the avoidance of unsafe conditions.
- A written training plan should require training for all forklift operators that includes the equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe equipment operation.
- Identify and label equipment not to be operated by workers under 18 and only provide keys to trained and authorized operators.

One strategy often overlooked strategy is telling workers what they can do to boost safety. While this effort on behalf of an employer is unusual, it's effective. Below are several effective activities that can be used to encourage workers to keep themselves and their colleagues safe—activities culled from CCHOS's infographic:

- Scrutinize potential employers – Workers should scrutinize potential employers regarding health and safety issues, looking for signs that their new employer takes safety seriously and follows the procedures and guidelines suggested. It is important to look for things like the availability of personal protective equipment, on-site safety posters that call attention to problem areas, and so on.
- Report all accidents and near misses – Remind your workers that they need to report accidents, near misses, and/or unsafe areas, as soon as they notice them. They shouldn't wait for someone else to do it. Instead, they should go directly to their manager and raise the issue. Also remind them that they can ask other employees and supervisors about existing safety hazards.
- Ask employees for help reviewing procedures – Ask employees to go over any procedures or practices your guidelines focus on to see if they're appropriate. Remind them that they can ask their managers to observe as they carry out their jobs and provide them with any advice on safely executing the task, if appropriate.

- Ask for safety documentation – Remind workers that it's also their job to look out for their own safety and that they can always ask for copies of any safety rules and procedures. Also, remind them that it's their job to follow all safety precautions themselves and that providing documentation relating to your health and safety is helpful.

## Employee Orientation

Orientation (sometimes called an induction) is the process of introducing **new, inexperienced, and transferred workers** to the organization, their supervisors, co-workers, work areas, and jobs, and especially to health and safety. Providing training and extra assistance during the initial period of employment is critical, regardless of the age of the employee, as they are not familiar with the hazards of the job or the workplace.

During this phase, each worker develops the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary to work in a safe and healthy manner. While training (or refresher training) is always important, training should always be provided when employees are:

- transferred to jobs or work areas they are unfamiliar with
- returning from an extended period away from work
- who are new to the work force

Not all training can or should be done on the first day. Time the orientation sessions to best match the needs of the workplace and the work done, but be sure all areas are covered.

**Safeguards for New Employees**

- Training- Even if a new employee has many years of experience on the job at another company they still need comprehensive training on their job at the new company, jobsite, and the company's expectations.
- Mentoring- Many companies use some type of mentoring program to ensure that individuals who were recently hired have someone to ask questions and get guidance from. This allows these workers to be more comfortable approaching a more

experience employee with any questions he or she might have.
- Supervision- Newer employees or even just workers completing new tasks need to be supervised. Proper supervision may not necessarily mean an employee's immediate supervisor. Depending on the task, a subject matter expert or a senior employee may be more beneficial for supervision of newer employees. Just like mentoring, a newer employee may feel more comfortable and get more out of being supervised by someone else other than their immediate supervisor.

**Summary**

While new employees can be a liability to a company, they also can serve as a great asset to everyone around them. The odds of a new employee avoiding an injury greatly depend on the individuals around them. Everyone starts somewhere and needs guidance in the beginning. Remember the struggles and important lessons learned as a new employee and pass that knowledge on. Safety on the job is everyone's responsibility. Watch out for those around you and never hesitate to help out a fellow employee.

# Five Tips for Young Workers with Summer Jobs

Five workers under the age of 25 were killed on the job in Washington state last year. One worker only was 18. An average of 79 young men and women between the ages of 16 and 24 are hurt on the job every day across the state.

1. Always get proper training on how to complete a job or use equipment properly before you begin the work.
2. You have the right to say "no" to tasks you feel unsafe doing, such as climbing a ladder or operating a new piece of equipment. Your boss cannot retaliate against you for refusing hazardous work.
3. Look for hazards at work, like slippery floors, hot grease, dangerous machinery or ladders. If you see a hazard or a problem that needs fixing, don't try to do it yourself; ask a supervisor for help.

4. There are special laws that protect teens under 18. Make sure you know your rights on the job.
5. If you are injured at work, even a small cut, be sure to report it. That way you'll be covered by workers' compensation if the problem becomes more serious.

## Employer Responsibilities for Keeping Young Workers Safe

Young workers are those new to the workforce, even up to age 24. Young workers can be an asset to your workforce. However, it may be their first job or the first time they are operating equipment.

**Protecting temporary workers**: Many young workers are also temporary workers. Host employers must treat temporary workers as they treat existing workers, especially including adequate training to young temporary workers. Temporary staffing agencies and host employers share control over the employee, and are therefore jointly responsible for the temp employee's safety and health.

**You can prevent or reduce workplace injuries** and make work safer for all workers, including youth. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act), employers have the responsibility to provide a safe and healthful work environment and comply with occupational safety and health standards. First-line supervisors have the greatest opportunity to protect young workers and influence their work habits.

## Employer Responsibilities:

### For Young Workers

- Understand and comply with the relevant federal and state child labor laws. For example, these laws prohibit youth from working certain hours and from performing dangerous/hazardous work.
- Ensure that young workers receive training to recognize hazards and are competent in safe work practices. Training

should be in a language and vocabulary that workers can understand and should include prevention of fires, accidents and violent situations and what to do if injured.

- Implement a mentoring or buddy system for new young workers. Have an adult or experienced young worker answer questions and help the new young worker learn the ropes of a new job.
- Encourage young workers to ask questions about tasks or procedures that are unclear or not understood. Tell them whom to ask.
- Remember that young workers are not just “little adults.” You must be mindful of the unique aspects of communicating with young workers.
- Ensure that equipment operated by young workers is both legal and safe for them to use. Employers should label equipment that young workers are not allowed to operate.
- Tell young workers what to do if they get hurt on the job.