



International
Labour
Organization

100
1919-2019



SAFETY AND HEALTH FOR YOUNG WORKERS

FACTSHEET FOR
EMPLOYERS



**YOUTH
4OSH**



WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT YOUNG WORKERS?

Young workers between **15-24 years of age** are a valuable asset to your company, bringing new energy and fresh ideas to the workplace. Young workers:

- ❑ Learn fast
- ❑ Appreciate the chance to learn skills and are anxious to do well
- ❑ Are enthusiastic
- ❑ Are full of ideas that can help your business grow and improve
- ❑ Are the future of your enterprise

However, young workers are still developing physically, mentally and emotionally. In comparison to adults, they are more sensitive to hazardous substances and conditions, are more likely to take risks, and may be bored more easily and let their attention wander. Young workers are usually enthusiastic and eager to work but may often feel pressure to perform, even when they sense a work task is hazardous. This pressure, combined with a lack of awareness of safety rules, limited skills and work experience, inadequate training, and unsuitable job assignments, can often expose them to hazardous conditions or unsafe work practices, resulting in an increased risk of work-related injuries.

It is a fact: When young workers and adult workers perform the same tasks, young workers are the group more likely to be injured.



EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Management's commitment to workplace safety, alongside its exemplary behaviour translates into a safer work environment for everyone. Employers also have legal responsibilities, such as to:

- ❑ Provide training on health and safety when workers start their job
- ❑ Monitor OSH issues and provide ongoing training for all workers and supervisors
- ❑ Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and demonstrate how to use it, care for it and store it properly
- ❑ Notify authorities of injuries and accidents
- ❑ Establish a health and safety committee (when applicable).

The most important thing you can do as an employer is to make workplace safety and health a priority, provide proper training, and encourage young workers to ask safety-related questions.



TRAINING

Employers must train workers in the position they will occupy beforehand, monitor them to ensure compliance with safe working practices, and provide refresher training on a regular basis. Training for young workers may include information on: the company's health and safety policy; workers' personal rights and responsibilities; potential hazards in the workplace; risk control measures; and where to go for advice and what to do if they sense that conditions are unsafe.

Proper training is essential: statistics and surveys show that – contrary to popular belief - young workers around the world are not receiving the training they need to be safe at work.

Young workers should be encouraged to ask safety questions at any time, without fear of reprisal. Demonstrate to them how to do each task in a safe way, and more than once to make sure they understand. Supervisors should use the ‘Tell me, show me, watch me’ approach when giving task-specific inductions to young workers. This approach has three steps:

TELL ME _____

Provide a clear and detailed explanation of the task, paying particular attention to critical elements and documented procedures.

SHOW ME _____

Demonstrate the task, explaining key points and asking the young workers questions to make sure they have understood.

WATCH ME _____

Review the young worker performing the task and provide clear and constructive feedback.

Let young workers practice. Be accessible. The young worker might feel pressured to get the task right the first time, so you can help by being patient, repeating instructions and demonstrating safe work procedures as often as necessary.



JOBS SUITABLE FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Workers over the age of 18 but below 24 years are adults, but they are still developing psychologically and physically. It is therefore important to assign them tasks that do not exceed their age and skills level. They may find it difficult to judge when a task is dangerous and wish to impress their supervisors and colleagues; but they are less likely to ask questions or raise concerns about their safety. Although many young workers are more than willing to sign up for extra work hours in the hope of getting overtime pay, do not be tempted to allow them to work overtime.

Be proactive! You cannot rely on young workers to ask for assistance.

Allow enough time for questions and feedback. Avoid assigning them tasks that require a high degree of skill, lengthy training or a great deal of responsibility. Do not expect a young person to work alone or perform critical or risky tasks.

The quality of the relationship that younger workers have with their direct supervisor is the most significant factor that determines whether or not they feel confident to ask a question or raise a concern. Those who have positive interactions with their supervisors are more likely to speak up and less likely to be injured at work.

Rewarding and recognizing a job well done is just as important as correcting errors. A positive workplace culture helps to engage young workers and inspire a positive attitude towards occupational safety and health. Management leads the way!



SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR YOUNG WORKERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

Workers under 18 should not carry out any work that is, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. For example, they should not:

- ❑ Work alone, long hours or at night
- ❑ Work in conditions of extreme cold or heat
- ❑ Work near or with hazardous chemicals
- ❑ Lift heavy items or carry loads for long distances
- ❑ Work on high structures or on equipment from which they might fall
- ❑ Use big machinery and equipment such as saws or tractors
- ❑ Work underground, underwater or in confined spaces
- ❑ Undertake any other task that might harm their health, safety or morals.



ORGANIZATION AND PREVENTION

The failure to identify or recognize existing hazards - or those that might have been anticipated - is one of the main causes of workplace injuries, illnesses, and incidents. A critical element of any effective safety and health programme is a proactive, ongoing process to identify and assess such hazards, and to eliminate, minimize and control exposure to them. When you assess workplace hazards, keep in mind that young workers have a unique risk profile.

Accidents and injuries are preventable with proper risk assessment and identification of appropriate risk control measures



THE BENEFITS OF GOOD OSH PRACTICES

Complying fully with health and safety laws, maintaining a safe workplace and investing time in training and appropriate supervision are likely to increase young workers' commitment at work and reduce their likelihood of being injured. Employers also benefit from a more productive workforce, fewer staff absences and lower costs. There is strong evidence that good OSH management is linked to improved performance and profitability. Safe workplaces are more efficient, more productive, and have less staff turnover.



WHAT IF YOU NEED ADVICE?

If you need advice on how to promote OSH at your workplace, engage in training activities or obtain support to solve a specific OSH issue, you may contact your employers' organization or relevant public authorities and/or private organizations dealing with OSH (Ministry of Labour, OSH authority, labour inspectorate, training institutions, etc.)



LEGISLATION IN YOUR COUNTRY

Legislation outlines the general rights and responsibilities that you have as an employer to promote OSH at the workplace for all workers, in particular young workers. Relevant OSH legislation may be found in your Labour Code and/or in specific OSH laws and regulations.

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