



Young worker safety - advice for employers

Young people, under the age of 25, represent the next generation of our workforce. Your role is to get them off to a safe and productive start. As an employer, you have a responsibility to make sure they work safely by providing a good health and safety management system which protects everyone. This factsheet provides advice on your role. Other factsheets cover more details on legal requirements to protect young workers, and advice for supervisors, for young people and for parents.

Young people can be at particular risk because they lack experience, training and awareness. They need good advice, information and supervision as well as suitable, safe and healthy jobs.

The results of bad practice

- A 17 year-old girl lost part of a finger only one hour after starting her holiday job. Her fingers were crushed in a machine at the bakery where she worked. The automatic safety guard was faulty, the fault had previously been reported but there was no planned maintenance programme, she had not received proper training about the machine and her supervisor was unaware that she was using the machine...
- An 18 year-old apprentice mechanic died 4 days after being engulfed in flames; he was helping his manager empty a mixture of petrol and diesel into a waste tank when the petrol exploded. Learning the trade,

he was very dependent on his employer for supervision and training but the garage owner left health and safety arrangements to the common sense of employees...

In both cases the companies were investigated and fined for their health and safety failings. Common causes of injury to young workers are from doing jobs they are not trained to do, inadequate supervision, and using dangerous machinery or substances. According to Canadian research, new and young, inexperienced workers are over five times more likely to be injured during their first four weeks of employment than other workers (1).

The benefits of good practice

Apart from complying with the law, there are clear benefits from paying attention to the health and safety of young workers.

- Good safety management is good for business and is a feature of an efficiently run organisation.
- Measures to keep young people safe will help protect all employees.
- By properly training and educating young people, you can benefit from their energy, enthusiasm and willingness to learn while keeping them safe on the job.
- Good supervision will help you assess how young people are getting on in the job and monitor the effectiveness of their training.
- Your reputation as a good employer will help you to attract good quality, young recruits.

Risk assessment, organisation and prevention

Employers must identify hazards and carry out a risk assessment to determine the particular risks to young people and the prevention measures needed (2). Risk assessments and the measures and arrangements based on risk assessment should therefore cover:

- tasks young people must NOT do, clearly identifying prohibitions on the use of specific equipment and specified work processes, restricted areas, and activities that can only be done under supervision;
- supervision needs and arrangements (see 'making supervision arrangements' below);
- information, instruction and training needs and arrangements (see 'training' below);
- prevention of bullying and sexual harassment;



(1) http://www.iapa.ca/outreach_yw/yw_employer.asp

(2) A hazard is anything that could cause illness or injury. The risk is the likelihood of it happening. Most accidents involve a failure to assess risks properly or to take action to control risks.

- arrangements to take account of any special requirements of young people with disabilities or special needs;
- informing parents and guardians of risks and control measures;
- liaison with work experience placement and vocational training organisers;
- consultation with worker representatives and young workers themselves over arrangements for young workers.

If you offer work experience placements to young people, you should provide them with at least the same health and safety protection as you would give your own employees.

Under-18s

If you employ under-18 year-olds, including those on vocational training and work experience placements and those doing casual work while still at school or college, more specific regulations apply covering restrictions regarding their exposure to hazards and working hours. See factsheet 'Protection for young people in the workplace' for more details of your duties to protect workers and the special requirements for young people. For the full requirements, check your national legislation.

Making supervision arrangements

Employers must make proper arrangements for supervising young people; for example, some employers assign mentors to young people.

Supervisors should be adequately trained about risks and control measures connected with the work of young people, and made aware of any restrictions on the tasks young people can do. They need to understand their role, what is required of them, and how to carry out their duties. They also need sufficient time and the authority to carry out their supervisory tasks. Arrangements should cover:

- how young people will be supervised, including the level of supervision for different tasks, identifying work operations which require constant supervision, and appointing someone to have overall responsibility for young people;

- competencies required by supervisors and role;
- training supervisors about their role and health and safety issues when supervising young people;
- numbers of suitably trained and competent supervisors, with the names of those responsible for young people, including trainees and work placement students;
- reporting arrangements for supervisors to notify any problems about young people's safety.

Training

It is essential that young people receive effective health and safety training before they start work, allocating sufficient time, including:

- specific hazards related to their job
- common hazards in the workplace generally
- what to do to protect themselves
- what to do if they think something is unsafe
- who to go to for advice
- what to do in an emergency, if they have an accident, or if they need first aid
- their responsibilities to cooperate with you on safety

Leading by example

It is important that you demonstrate your own commitment to health and safety, establish procedures and measures and keep them up-to-date, emphasise that unsafe practices are unacceptable and respond promptly to health and safety concerns.

Further information on young worker safety is available from the Agency website at <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/> Prevention advice and links to good practice for specific risks and workplaces are available at: <http://osha.eu.int/> Sources of advice include national authorities, trade unions and trade associations.

A link to the full text of Council Directive 94/33/EC on the protection of young people at work is available at: <http://osha.eu.int/data/legislation/18>

The directive sets minimum standards, so it is important to check the full requirements of your national legislation and guidance:

More information on guidance for Great Britain available from <http://www.hse.gov.uk>

More information on legislation for Ireland is available at: <http://www.hsa.ie>

More information on legislation for Malta is available at: <http://mt.osha.eu.int/legislation>

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