

Spot The Safety Violation: Should Toddlers Weld?



There's something to be said for training workers when they're young but isn't this welder just a little *too* young'



Certain workers are more vulnerable to workplace injuries than others, most notably workers who are young'under the age of 25'and those who are new. So these workers need additional protections on the job.

This picture of a very, very young child welding is disturbing on so many levels. Although the father at least had the sense to protect the toddler's head with a welder's helmet, the child is otherwise completely unprotected. And frankly, there are simply no safety measures that could be put in place that would make it acceptable for a child this young to be performing such a dangerous task.

Obviously, a scenario such as the one depicted in this picture is unlikely to occur in any workplace. But employers *have* taken risks with the safety of the youngest members of their workforce'sometimes with tragic results.

Example: An Alberta museum hired a 14-year-old boy and assigned him the job of sandblasting a truck box. While doing the work, the box fell on him, crushing him to death. The museum and its director were convicted of violating the Alberta *Employment Standards Code* by hiring a worker under 15-years-old without his parents' consent and having that worker work in an environment that could be dangerous to his life, health, education or welfare. The museum was also charged with 10 OHS violations. The court imposed the maximum penalty'\$500,000 [*Reynolds Museum Ltd.*, AB Govt. News Release, July 13, 2006].

7 TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUNG WORKERS

Young workers are protected by the OHS laws and the employment standards laws. So ensure that your company complies with the requirements under both sets of laws (See, New & Young Worker Compliance Centre). And here are seven tips to help you keep your young workers safe on the job:

1. Give young workers a safety orientation when they start working for you. During the orientation, tell them that if they're ever confused about any procedures, they must go to a supervisor rather than try to figure it out on their own. (Use this young worker orientation checklist to ensure your orientation covers all the bases.)
2. Tell workers how to report unsafe or unhealthy conditions and reinforce your expectation that they'll do so without delay.
3. Ensure they're properly trained on safe work procedures, PPE use and the hazards they could face on the job. And don't simply take a young worker's word that he's clear on the procedure. Have that person explain and demonstrate the tasks he'll be required to perform and observe him on the job.
4. Don't overload young workers with information. Provide training in manageable chunks so they can absorb and retain the information. (Learn how to make your young worker training more effective.)
5. Ensure that young workers are closely supervised. Also, ask other experienced workers to watch out for them and intervene if they see a young worker performing a task unsafely or incorrectly. (For example, implement a mentor program.)
6. Give them written safety information that they can use for reference when needed.
7. Be a good role model'and ensure that supervisors do the same.

7 THINGS YOUNG WORKERS NEED TO KNOW

1. What you don't know *can* hurt you.
2. What you *do* know can help you.
3. The law protects all workers with the right to know the hazards in the workplace, the right to participate and the right to refuse unsafe work.
4. The OHS law sets expectations for employers, supervisors, JHSCs and workers.
5. You can expect your employer and supervisor to give you the information, training and equipment you need to protect yourself.
6. You must tell your supervisor if you get injured or sick on the job or are aware of a near miss incident that could've resulted in an injury.
7. Don't take risks with your health and safety'or anyone else's!