

Study Finds Young Workers Reluctant to Report Minor Injuries



Studies have found that young workers are one of the more vulnerable segments of the workforce and thus more likely to get hurt on the job. And a new study found that when young workers do suffer minor injuries, they're reluctant to report the injury or the conditions that caused it.

Haskayne School of Business professor Nick Turner co-authored the study, which appears in the June issue of the *Journal of Safety Research*, with Sean Tucker of the University of Regina and Kevin Kelloway of Saint Mary's University.

The study examined the self-reported frequency of non-lost work time injuries, or 'microaccidents,' over a four-week period from a sample of more than 19,000 young workers in Canada. 'Microaccidents' result from same conditions that can lead to more severe injuries.

The researchers also examined the frequency of three types of work-related safety behaviours: safety voice, safety compliance and safety neglect, recalled over that four-week period. Such behaviours could keep young workers from getting injured.

Highlights from the study's findings:

- Approximately one-third of all young workers recalled experiencing at least one microaccident in the last four weeks.
- Younger workers between the ages of 15-18 reported less safety voice, less safety compliance and more safety neglect than workers aged 19-22. That is, this group of young workers spoke up less frequently in the face of dangerous work and reported neglecting work safety rules more frequently than their older counterparts.
- Young males reported more microaccidents and more safety voice, safety compliance, and safety neglect than young females.

So how do you get young workers to report unsafe conditions and minor injuries while complying with the company's safety rules?

'Parents, siblings, friends, teachers and co-workers can all help entrench the importance of work and attitudes of work in young workers, but when it comes to

workplace safety, our research is showing it is the adult figure of influence in the workplace'the supervisor'who is the most important social influence,' explained Turner.

'Young workers with supervisors who show the young workers they care about safety are more inclined to speak up about dangerous work and this, in turn, seems to be related to lower workplace injuries.'

In addition, the OHS Insider's New & Young Worker Compliance Centre has resources that can help you better protect these vulnerable workers, including:

- A young worker orientation checklist you can download and use to create a young worker safety training program
- An infographic on new and young workers you can display in your workplace
- Recorded webinars on young worker safety training and how to effectively provide safety training to 'generation Y' workers
- An example of how one workplace improved its young worker training program
- Safety posters geared toward new and young workers.