The Top 7 Dangers for Young Workers



Young workers’those under the age of 25’are one of the most vulnerable segments of the workforce. But there are some safety hazards that may pose more of a risk to these workers or result in more injuries than others.

According to WorkSafeBC, the top seven dangers for young workers are:

Danger #1: Lifting Objects

Young workers are at significant risk of injury as a result of lifting objects in a number of industries. Injuries incurred include sprains, strains, and tears associated with lifting boxes, crates, bags, buckets, pallets, lumber, and structural metal materials. A significant number of these injuries are sustained by material handlers, retail and grocery sales clerks, labourers, and shippers and receivers.

Danger #2: Working at Elevation

Young workers are at risk of falls when working at elevation in any industry. Situations in which young workers are at risk of falling from elevated levels often involve working on ladders, stairs, scaffolds and platforms. Injuries also occur when workers jump to lower levels from stationary vehicles or structures. Injuries range in severity from minor sprains, strains, and tears to multiple fractures or even death.

Danger #3: Working with Knives

Cooks, food service helpers/preparers, retail clerks and shelf stockers employed in the restaurant and supermarket industries are at significant risk for cuts and lacerations when working with knives. Often this type of injury occurs when a knife slips in the hand of the worker. Resulting cuts and lacerations range in severity, with one in 130 claims involving amputation of a finger or thumb.

Danger #4: Working with Hot substances and Objects

Cooks, waiters and food preparers employed in the hospitality/service industry (for example, restaurants, hotels, pubs, food/beverage concessions) are at significant risk for heat burns and scalds when working with hot substances or objects. Typically these injuries involve hot fats and oils or hot water. They may also involve steam, other food products, or even pots, pans, and trays. Resulting burns range in severity. But serious injuries have a long-term, profound impact to the worker, usually requiring hospitalization and cosmetic surgery.

Danger #5: Operating Mobile Equipment or Motor Vehicles

In any industry, there may be young workers working with mobile equipment or motor vehicles who are at risk of injury. A significant number of motor vehicle accidents involve truck drivers, couriers, delivery drivers and material handlers. Injuries range in severity from minor sprains, strains and tears to multiple fractures or even death. These serious injuries can have a profound impact on the worker, usually requiring hospitalization and rehabilitation.

Danger #6: Working with Food Slicers

Young workers employed in restaurants and supermarkets are at significant risk of injury when working with food slicers. Generally, these injuries occur to deli clerks, cooks, food

service helpers/preparers, and retail clerks in supermarkets. Around 80% of these injuries involve cuts and lacerations. One in 80 claims is an amputation of a finger or thumb. These serious injuries result in significant physical impairment, impacting the injured worker's quality of life.

Danger #7: Working near Running Equipment and Machinery

Young workers are at significant risk of injury as a result of getting caught in running equipment or machinery in a number of industries. These injuries typically occur to labourers in wood and paper manufacturing, metal fabrication, food and beverage processing, and construction, as well as machine operators, material handlers, bakers, and cooks. Half of these injuries involve conveyors, food and beverage processing machinery, sawing, drilling and milling machinery, and powered hand tools. Although a variety of injuries can be inflicted, cuts, lacerations and fractures are most common.

To learn more about how to better protect young (and new) workers in your workplace, attend our free webinar on May 18, 2016, in which OHS consultant Yvonne O'Reilly will discuss practical steps to implement a safety awareness program for new and young workers. Register now for this one-hour session.