

YOUNG WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY



BACKGROUND NOTES

Our early jobs are often where our attitudes toward workplace safety begin to develop. Regardless of whether it's our first job or not, starting a conversation about safety, and moving toward preventing injury and **not** normalizing it as “part of the job”, is something we can all promote in our attitudes and actions. In this video Rod Stickman (with the help of some new friends!) discusses these six key safety topics.

Worker safety rights

Nova Scotia's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act and regulations include the safety rights and responsibilities that employers and workers have. All workers have three main rights to protect their safety at work:

- The **right to know** about hazards and how to safely work with and around them.
- The **right to participate** in your own safety, like joining a safety committee.
- The **right to refuse** work that you feel could hurt you or someone else.

Recognizing workplace hazards

All types of work have hazards. We need to understand this so we can take measures to keep ourselves and others healthy and safe at work. We can't know every hazard in every workplace, but we do know that all hazards are classed only into these five groups:

- **Physical** – machinery, equipment, exposure to electricity, high noise, vibration, etc.
- **Chemical** – manufactured or natural chemicals, WHMIS – regulated substances, etc.
- **Biological** – moulds, mildews, bacteria & viruses, work with people, animals, insects, etc.
- **Ergonomic** – impact of body posture, force, repetition, design of work process, tools, etc.
- **Psychosocial** – interaction of people, stressors, nature of work, etc.

Safety advocacy: speaking up to ask questions and report hazards

Speaking up for safety is one of the most important work skills we will learn. It can be uncomfortable and even a little scary, but letting things slide – even if others appear to – means hazards aren't identified and fixed. Workers have the right and responsibility to speak up. Employers have the responsibility to listen and investigate safety reports and concerns.

Safely lifting and moving materials

The most common injuries for Nova Scotia workers are to the neck, shoulders and back. Awareness and prevention of these types of injuries depends on four key things:

- Proper design – is the process required to complete the task safe?
- Proper tools – do we have the necessary equipment to safely lift and move materials?
- Proper training and technique – training can tell us how, when – and when not! – to lift.
- Communication – talk about how to prevent soft tissue injuries, and then do something!

For more information about safe lifting, see “Working By Design”

Preventing workplace bullying and violence

Nova Scotia's “Violence in the Workplace” Regulation clearly lays out what employers must do to identify and control for risk of violence to workers. It can be viewed under the province's occupational health and safety information data base, gov.ns.ca/lae/kb. Bullying and violence in the workplace are **never** ok. If you see it or experience it, don't hide it. Talk to someone and then report it to a supervisor. If you don't get the support you need, you can call the NS Occupational Health Division or the WCB.

Understanding importance of safety rules

All workplaces need safety rules – this is the employer's responsibility under health and safety legislation. These rules reflect that the employer will do all he or she can to ensure the health and safety of their workers, including safety training and communication, safe equipment, and hazard awareness and control. Workers are required to follow safety rules and not take short cuts, even if others do!

QUESTION & DISCUSSION POINTS

What hazards have you seen or experienced – here or in another workplace – which are like the ones in the video we just watched? Examples:

- working around hot surfaces or substances
- working at height
- working with power equipment or hand tools
- working with the public and handling money
- List group examples

Which of the following hazards do we have here in our workplace? What are the most risky? (List group answers)

- equipment for food and drink preparation (ie. coffee pots, fryers, ovens, slicers)
- slippery floors and surfaces
- rushing to finish tasks
- handling money/dealing with the public
- List group examples

How do we control these hazards in our workplace now? What safety measures do we have in place? (Look at the listed hazards and add safety measures for them)

- understand and exercise our safety rights and responsibilities
- training for workers and their supervisors
- proper and safe work procedure
- protective clothing and non-slip flooring
- List group examples

What changes can we make to better control these hazards? What can be done quickly, and what would likely take more time? (List examples)

- report hazards, tell the supervisor when bad things happen
- investigate how we're working now, can it be done more safely?
- Training and clearer communication
- List group examples

How can you influence safety changes? (List points: what can be done now and what could be done in the future?)

- Talk to supervisor
- Talk to safety representative or JOHS Committee members
- Take part in a JOHS Committee
- Help employer identify hazards and fix them
- Talk to other businesses with similar hazards
- Include safety projects in future planning

CONCLUSION

- Get the training you need to safely do your work. If it's not offered right away, ask for it!
- Ask your boss to explain safety rules, and follow them!
- Take the time to work safely. If you're feeling way too rushed, talk to your supervisor.
- Don't take shortcuts, even if other people do!
- Always use safety equipment, including protective gear and clothing.
- Operate machinery and tools properly.
- Be an advocate for safety; if they need it, help others to speak up too.
- Report anything you feel is unsafe.
- Work **with** your supervisor and boss to make positive change happen!

Rod is a great way to begin the conversation about workplace safety. But he's just the start to a safer workplace. If you see a hazard in your workplace, be sure to report it to your supervisor – all hazards must be investigated.

WCB of Nova Scotia: 1-800-870-3331

NS OHS Division: 1-800-952-2687 or 1-902-424-5400

To learn more, visit worksafeforlife.ca/youngworkers

