

Inspection Blitz To Focus On Young And New Worker Safety

April 16, 2010

In May 2010, the Ontario government will begin a four-month enforcement blitz of industrial, construction and health care workplaces where young and new workers are working part-time or will soon begin summer jobs.

The blitz is part of the province's [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy, launched in June 2008.

Between May and August 2010, Ministry of Labour inspectors will focus on the safety of young and new workers. The goal will be to prevent injuries and deaths.

It is the third year in a row a young and new worker blitz will be held.

As in previous years, inspectors will take a "zero tolerance" approach to any contraventions involving minimum age requirements, guarding issues or personal protective equipment under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations.

Background

Young and new workers in Ontario are four times more likely to be injured during the first month of employment than at any other time.

Between 2004 and 2009, 27 young workers aged 15 to 24 died in work-related incidents. Another 466 received critical injuries.

The fatalities were mainly due to motor vehicle incidents, falls and incidents caused by machinery, according to statistics at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

More than 46 per cent of lost-time injury claims occurred in the service sector, followed by the manufacturing sector (13.6 per cent), transportation (7.2 per cent) and municipal government (6 per cent).

Many of the injured young workers were employed as salespeople, transport/equipment operators and labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities.

The most common work-related injuries included sprains and strains, cuts/lacerations/punctures and bruises/contusions.

More than 100,000 new businesses are started each year in Ontario. About 16 per cent are started by young people under the age of 25.

Blitz Focus

The blitz will focus on:

- Young and new workers aged 14 to 24 years.
- New workers 25 and older who have been on the job less than six months or who have been reassigned to a new job.

New workers include:

- Any new hire, either permanent or temporary, including supervisors, with or without experience in the industry where they are working
- Current workers who are assigned new jobs
- Student workers, co-op placements or apprentices
- Contractors and/or subcontractors

Ministry inspectors will place special emphasis on the safety of young and new workers in locations such as construction sites, health care establishments, retail stores, wholesalers, restaurants, vehicle sales and service and enterprises involving tourism, farming operations and municipalities.

Inspectors will also check workplaces such as golf courses, camps, temporary amusement parks and locations where workers are engaged in activities such as landscaping.

Ministry inspectors will target workplaces:

- With a high incidence of lost-time injuries among new and young workers.
- Identified as a high-priority.
- Known to have highly hazardous processes and equipment.
- Where complaints have been received and there is a poor overall compliance history.
- Where young and new workers are often employed, including regular and seasonal employment.
- Not previously visited.

Priorities

Inspectors will focus on the following key priorities:

- **Orientation, training and supervision:** Inspectors will check to ensure young and new workers are being given the proper orientation and training when starting a job and are receiving appropriate supervision. Young and new workers should have knowledge of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). They should also be aware of their rights and responsibilities, including their right to refuse work that could endanger themselves or others.
- **Minimum age requirements:** Inspectors will ensure workers meet minimum age requirements under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Workers must be at least:
 - 14 to work in industrial establishments such as offices, stores, arenas and restaurant serving areas;
 - 15 to work in most factories, including restaurant kitchens, automotive service garages, produce and meat preparation, and shipping and receiving areas in grocery stores, laundries and warehouses; and
 - 16 to work in logging operations.

- **Safety measures:** Inspectors will ensure safety measures are in place to prevent injuries. This may include safe practices for materials handling and mechanical device usage to prevent ergonomics and musculoskeletal injuries, procedures for specific equipment such as using guarding devices on machinery and the safe use of lifting devices, ladders and personal protective equipment to prevent falls. In addition, inspectors will check to ensure employers are meeting new requirements that come into effect on June 15, 2010 for protecting workers from workplace violence and harassment.

Safe At Work Ontario

Sector- and hazard-specific inspection blitzes are an important feature of the [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy. There is no acceptable rate of injury in Ontario workplaces.

Safe at Work Ontario is the Ministry of Labour's workplace health and safety strategy focusing on:

- Enforcement
- Compliance
- Partnership

Since being launched in June 2008, the province's team of more than 400 safety inspectors has made in excess of 68,000 field visits, issued more than 200,000 compliance orders and conducted 18 proactive [inspection blitzes](#).

INFORMATION FOR YOUNG AND NEW WORKERS

For more information, visit the:

- Young worker portal on the Ministry of Labour's website: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/atwork/youngworkers.php
- Ministry of Labour's *WorkSmartOntario* website for information on workplace health and safety and workers' employment rights and responsibilities: www.worksmartontario.gov.on.ca
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's website for young workers for tips on starting a new job and dealing with unsafe workplaces: www.youngworker.ca
- Ministry of Labour's *WorkSmartCampus* health and safety information geared to post-secondary students: www.worksmartcampus.ca