

Keeping Young Workers Safe

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CHAPTER 1 - ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

1.0 Introduction

This guide provides information to help keep young workers safe at work. Young workers are often inexperienced and may be uncomfortable speaking up or asking questions. They can also be eager to prove themselves and may take on tasks beyond their abilities. Combined, these factors can make young workers particularly vulnerable to workplace injury.

This guide has been designed to help you, as an employer or supervisor, understand your responsibilities when working with young workers. It provides practical support for delivering effective training, supervision and safety orientation so young workers can stay safe on the job. It is important to note that under the *Youth Employment Act*, employers must personally oversee young workers' tasks or make sure they're always supervised by an experienced adult familiar with the work being performed.

This guide provides information in a summarized format. It does not address all workplace health and safety legislation. Always refer to the PEI *Occupational Health & Safety Act* (OHS Act) and Regulations for full compliance and specific requirements that apply to your workplace.

This guide will:

- Help you understand your legal responsibilities as an employer
- Provide effective safety orientation
- Stress the importance of supervising work and correcting unsafe behaviours
- Help you train your workers to do their jobs safely
- Introduce the concept of hazard awareness and encourage safe decision making

For additional support, please contact:

Workers Compensation Board (WCB)

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Division

Email: ohs@wcb.pe.ca

Phone: 902-368-5680 or 1-800-237-5049 toll-free in Atlantic Canada

24-Hour OHS Emergency Line: 902-628-7513

For additional resources:

- Visit our website at **wcb.pe.ca**
- Download our **Guide to OHS Legislation App** available for iOS and Android

Find and follow us on

CHAPTER 2 - EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES AND WORKER RIGHTS

As an employer in Prince Edward Island, you are legally responsible for providing a safe workplace for all workers. This means taking proactive steps to prevent injuries and illnesses through proper training and supervision. It also means making sure that equipment and tools are inspected regularly, properly maintained, and supported by a system for reporting defects or hazards before use.

2.1 What is due diligence?

Due diligence refers to “all the reasonable steps” an employer has taken to protect workers from harm. Employers and Supervisors can demonstrate due diligence in a number of ways.

What does due diligence look like in practice?

- Understanding and meeting legal responsibilities
- Providing proper orientation, training, and instruction
- Actively supervising work and making sure safe practices are followed consistently
- Addressing hazardous situations when reported and correcting unsafe behaviors immediately
- Making sure that equipment is maintained in good working condition
- Documenting training, education, or any corrective actions
- Explaining tasks step by step for young or new worker
- Making sure that safety equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) is used properly



Practicing due diligence is not optional. It’s a legal responsibility under Part 12 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS Act).

2.2 Who is a Supervisor?

A **supervisor** is a person who provides directions to workers on their work-related tasks. This can include any worker, manager, or employer regardless of whether they have the title of "Supervisor." If a supervisor cannot always be on site, a competent person should be appointed to supervise the work. As per Part 24(4)(b) of the *OHS Act*, a supervisor's responsibilities must be outlined in the workplace's safety policy.

Clearly defined roles, along with proper precautions, help support a strong safety culture to prevent workplace incidents.

2.3 Workplace safety is a shared responsibility

Workplace safety is built on the **Internal Responsibility System** (IRS). This means that everyone in the workplace has a role to play in keeping the workplace safe, including employers, supervisors, and workers. Workers should feel encouraged to speak about hazards or concerns. They should also know who to report hazard concerns to and how to report them so they can be addressed quickly.



2.4 Worker Rights

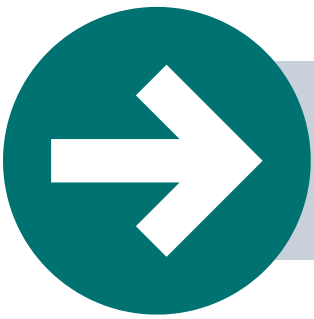
Young workers must understand their safety responsibilities, roles at work, and what to expect from employers.

Every worker has three basic legal rights:		
The Right to Know	Receive the information and training needed to recognize hazards and work safely.	
The Right to Participate	Take an active role in safety by speaking up, asking questions, and raising concerns when something doesn't feel right.	
The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work	Refuse dangerous work tasks without punishment.	

When supporting workers in understanding their rights:

- Use real workplace examples
- Explain how and who to report hazards to
- Encourage workers to speak up for their safety
- Show that you take safety concerns seriously by addressing them promptly
- Reinforce safe behaviors often
- Include safety as part of your everyday work

Taking time to make sure workers understand their duties and responsibilities in a way that is meaningful to them is essential for a safe workplace. When expectations are clear and everyone works together, injuries and illnesses can be prevented, and a strong safety culture can grow.



A positive safety culture is one of the most proactive and effective ways to support a safer workplace.

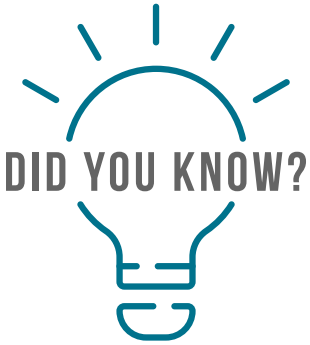
CHAPTER 3 - SAFETY ORIENTATION

When hiring young workers, a safety orientation helps them understand hazards, safe work practices, and their responsibilities. It's a key part of onboarding. Because every job is different, workplace and task specific orientations help workers become familiar with hazards, equipment, and safe work procedures for their role.

A strong orientation should be:

- Completed before work begins
- Specific to the job and workplace
- Reviewed again after 1–2 weeks on the job

Young workers have a lot to learn, and building their skills and knowledge takes time. A well-planned orientation helps build confidence and encourages safe work practices from day one.



Over 30,000 young workers are injured on the job each year in Canada. Many of these injuries happen in the first six months of the young workers' employment.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Use the Health and Safety Orientation for Workers Checklist found in Appendix A as a guide for your safety orientation. It can be copied or adapted to suit your workplace and tasks.

Once you have completed the worker's orientation:

- Do a final review to confirm the worker's understanding
- Have all parties sign the Safety Orientation for Workers Checklist
- Keep a copy in the worker's file

Keeping a copy of the signed checklist provides documentation that demonstrates due diligence and shows that all general safety expectations are met.

Once you have completed the checklist, it is now time to train workers on their **job-specific tasks** and provide them with ongoing support and supervision.

CHAPTER 4 – TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Proper training and supervision in the early stages of employment can significantly reduce the risk of injury and illness.

4.1 Training young workers

Once a worker has received a basic workplace safety orientation, employers are then responsible for providing job-specific training.

Young workers should be trained to:

- Perform tasks safely
- Operate machinery and equipment safely
- Use and maintain PPE
- Follow safe work procedures
- Know what to do in an emergency

Effective training includes both **clear instructions** and **hands-on practice**. This will help workers understand what to do and how to do it. Effective training also gives supervisors the opportunity to provide workers with guidance and appropriate feedback.

Employers can make mistakes when training new workers. Sometimes, they:

- Provide orientation, but no follow-up
- Leave new workers alone too soon
- Assume young workers understand and will ask questions
- Skip hands-on training
- Don't correct unsafe behavior
- Pair them with unsafe workers



Training can be simple

The **Classic Training Method**, which has been proven to be successful, uses just **four steps** to make sure important parts of training are covered.

Classic Training Method

1 MOTIVATE

- Find out what the learner already knows
- Emphasize the importance of the task
- Build the learner's interest

2 TELL/ SHOW

- Explain how the task is done, as well as what PPE is required
- Demonstrate how the task is done
- Stress the key points

3 TEST

- Have the learner explain how the task is done
- Have the learner demonstrate how the task is done
- Guide, correct, repeat and review directions, as needed
- Use positive reinforcement, where appropriate

4 CHECK

- Make sure that support is in place, as needed
- Check back often to answer questions, review key points, and monitor the learner's progress

4.2 Training records

Keep written records of the training that is provided to each worker by documenting:

- Who did the training
- What training was completed
- When the training was completed

4.3 Supervision

Supervising young workers is essential because they may be unfamiliar with workplace hazards, unsure when to ask questions, or eager to take on tasks before they are ready. Regular supervision helps confirm that safe work practices are being followed and it also allows for the early correction of unsafe behaviours. Regular supervision gives young workers the support they need to build confidence and strong safety habits.

Training and supervision are not one-time tasks; they are ongoing responsibilities. As an employer, when you consider training as both a daily priority and a legal responsibility, you support the wellbeing of your workers and strengthen the safety culture of your organization.

CHAPTER 5 – HAZARD, RISK AND CONTROL

Employers are legally responsible for making sure that workers are aware of workplace hazards. Employers are also legally responsible for implementing controls that help keep workers safe. Even obvious hazards may have to be pointed out until workers build the skills to recognize them on their own.

5.1 Hazard awareness

A **hazard** is anything that has the potential to cause harm to a person or property. Understanding and controlling hazards leads to fewer and less severe injuries and illnesses can reduce costs, downtime, and disruptions for your organization.



1. Hazard: Something that could cause harm (e.g., **Wet floor**)

2. Risk: The likelihood that a hazard will cause harm and how severe the harm could be (e.g., **Slipping and falling could result in a broken arm**)

3. Control: The steps taken to eliminate or reduce the risk (e.g., **Clean up spill, use signage, wear proper footwear**)

Understanding these points helps workers not only identify and assess hazards but also recognize the steps to prevent incidents in their workplace.

5.2 Understanding risk

Once a hazard has been identified, reviewing the questions below with the worker will help them make safer decisions on the job. Encourage workers to consider the following when evaluating risk:

- Who might be harmed?
- What kind of injury or illness could be suffered?
- How severe would it most likely be?
- How long are workers exposed to the hazard?
- How frequent is the exposure?

5.3 Identifying and addressing the hazard

Grouping hazards into six categories will help workers recognize risks in different environments and situations:

- **Physical** – noise, temperature, slips/trips
- **Chemical** – cleaning products, fumes
- **Biological** – viruses, bacteria
- **Ergonomic** – lifting, repetitive work
- **Safety** – tools, machinery, sharp objects
- **Psychological** – stress, bullying, harassment

Once young workers can identify hazards, they should also know:

- How to report the hazard
- Who to report the hazard to
- That their concerns will be taken seriously
- That they won't face any consequences for speaking up and are encouraged to do so

5.4 Young Workers: Missed hazards and underestimated risk

Young workers may not report hazards and may not understand the level of risk they pose. This may be because they:

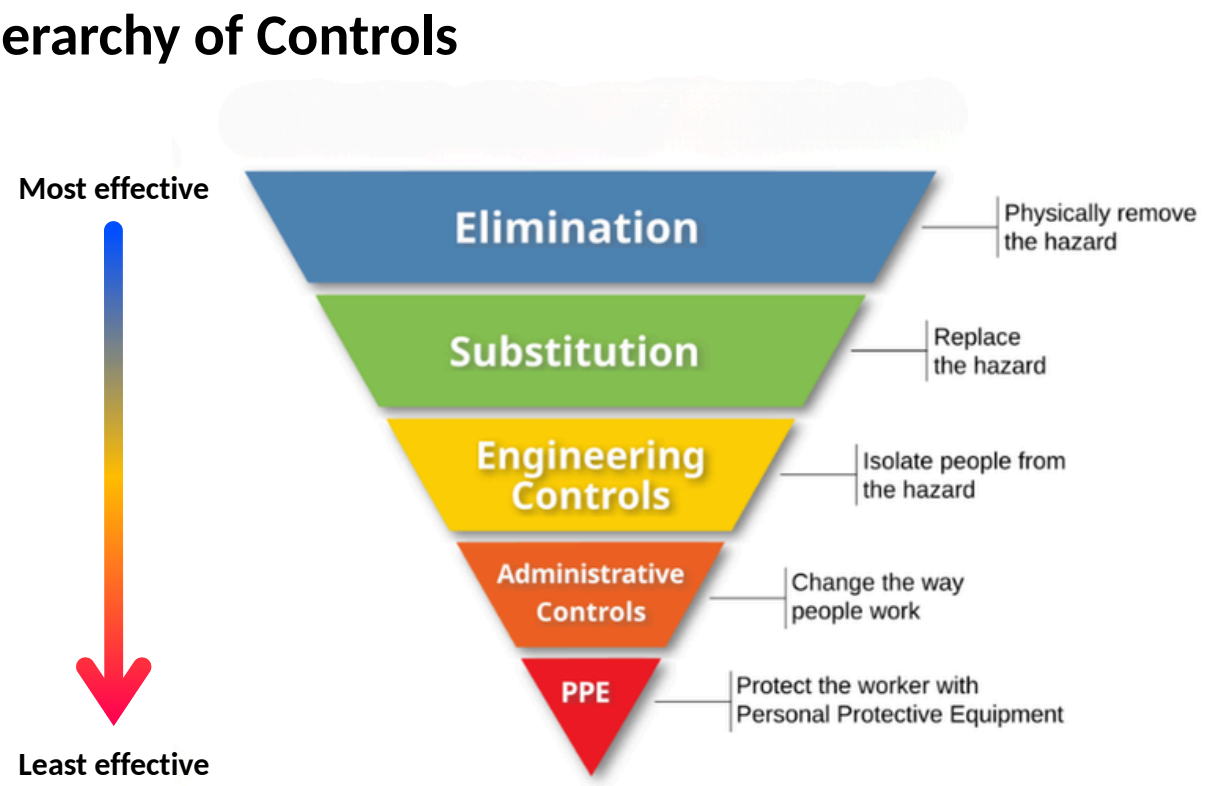
- Don't recognize the hazards
- Lack workplace experience
- Want to prove themselves
- Don't feel comfortable asking questions or speaking up
- Assume something is safe because others are doing it

Proper supervision, a positive workplace culture and frequent conversations about workplace safety are key in keeping all workers safe.



5.5 Controlling hazards using the Hierarchy of Controls

The Hierarchy of Controls is a great tool to help you eliminate and control exposure to hazards. The controls are ranked by effectiveness, starting with elimination. When elimination is not possible a combination of substitution, engineering, administrative, and PPE might be required to protect your workers.



5.6 Developing hazard and risk recognition skills

Hazard awareness is a skill that is developed over time with the help of employers and supervisors. You can support workers by:

- Walking through the job site and discussing hazards
- Asking questions like: “What could go wrong here?” “What should you do to stay safe?”
- Using real examples from the workplace
- Demonstrating how hazards are controlled throughout the workplace
- Encouraging workers to speak up to report hazards or concerns
- Including daily hazard discussions or toolbox talks

When young workers understand hazards, learn to assess risks and use the appropriate controls, they gain the confidence to build strong safety habits for the future.

CHAPTER 6 – RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

When young workers are trained, supervised, and supported, injuries and illnesses can be prevented. The WCB has numerous resources to support employers and workers.

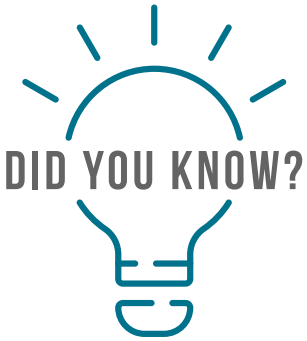
Visit wcb.pe.ca to access:

- More safety information about young workers and employers
- Guides, checklists, and videos
- Information on PEI OHS Legislation, rights and responsibilities
- View our Workshop and Events Calendar for current training opportunities

You can also register for a free online course to assist in health and safety education.

Topics include:

- Workplace Safety for Young Workers
- OHS Essentials
- Supervisor Safety
- Psychological Health and Safety



The WCB has a Youth Education Consultant who works directly with students, schools, young workers, and employers of young workers across PEI.

The Youth Education Consultant can:

- Deliver classroom or workplace presentations
- Help you understand workplace safety
- Answer questions about rights and responsibilities

To contact the Youth Education Consultant about young worker safety, email: ohs@wcb.pe.ca.

Appendix A–Health and Safety Orientation for Workers Checklist

This checklist is your guide for conducting a health and safety orientation for workers. It is important and necessary that you customize this document to meet the unique circumstances of your workplace or work site. A thorough orientation should cover any unique hazards, specialized equipment, or site-specific procedures for workers.

Checking off each item confirms that the topics have been reviewed with the worker.

COMPANY SAFETY REQUIREMENTS	✓	N/A	Notes
Safety policy – If applicable, review the company's safety policy to make sure the worker understands the organization's commitment to maintaining a safe workplace.			
Roles and responsibilities – The worker understands the responsibilities of the employer, supervisor, and worker in maintaining a safe work environment.			
Workplace harassment – The worker has reviewed the company's workplace harassment policy and understands how to recognize, report, and prevent harassment.			
Safe work procedures and policies – The worker has been trained on established safe work procedures and policies relevant to their role.			
Incident reporting – The worker understands the process for reporting			
WHMIS – The worker has received training on Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and understands how to safely handle hazardous substances.			
Safety Committee and Safety Representative – If applicable, the worker has been introduced to the company's Safety Representative or Safety Committee members and understands their role in making sure the workplace is safe.			
Ergonomics and hazard recognition – The worker has received training in proper ergonomics, injury prevention, and identifying workplace hazards.			
Workplace inspections and safety controls - The worker is trained on the workplace inspection process and on how to correct hazards			
Right to refuse unsafe work – The worker understands their right to refuse unsafe work and the steps to follow if they believe a task is unsafe.			

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)	✓	N/A	Notes
PPE requirements – The worker is aware of the required PPE for their role including when and how to use it.			
Use, fit, storage, maintenance – The worker has been trained on the correct use, fit, storage, and maintenance of required PPE.			
IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION	✓	N/A	Notes
Supervisor – The worker knows who their direct supervisor is and how to contact them for safety concerns.			
Safety Representative – If applicable, the worker is aware of who the Safety Representative is and how to contact them for safety-related issues.			
Safety Committee Members – If applicable, the worker has been provided with the names and contact information of Safety Committee members and knows to contact them for safety-related issues.			
Workplace First Aiders – The worker knows who the Workplace First Aider(s) are and how to contact them when first aid is necessary.			
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS	✓	N/A	Notes
Emergency Procedures – The worker has been trained on emergency response procedures, including evacuation and other procedures for different emergency situations in the workplace.			
First Aid Kits - The worker is aware of the contents and location of the first aid kit.			
Workplace First Aiders – The worker has been introduced to the Workplace First Aider(s) and how to contact them when first aid is necessary.			
OTHER - INCLUDE THE UNIQUE SAFETY FEATURES OF YOUR WORKPLACE			

Include the signatures from all parties to indicate that the orientation has been completed to the satisfaction of the employer, supervisor and worker. A copy of this checklist should be retained in the worker's personnel file.

Worker Name:	**Signature:**	**Date:**
Employer Name:	**Signature:**	**Date:**

Appendix B–Task Training Record /Sign-Off Sheet

Task Training Record /Sign-Off Sheet	
Worker Name:	**Position:**
Department:	**Date:**
Supervisor/Trainer:	
Task/Equipment:	**Demonstrated Safely (Y/N):**
Supervisor/Trainer Initials:	
Task/Equipment:	**Demonstrated Safely (Y/N):**
Supervisor/Trainer Initials:	
Task/Equipment:	**Demonstrated Safely (Y/N):**
Supervisor/Trainer Initials:	
Worker Sign-Off: **I understand the tasks listed above and how to perform them safely.**	
Signature:	**Date:**
Supervisor/Trainer Sign-Off: **I confirm the worker has demonstrated these tasks safely.**	
Signature:	**Date:**

Training record will be stored in the worker's personnel file.

Appendix C–Emergency Information Template

All workers should know emergency procedures before starting work and be shown where key equipment is located.

Emergency Information	
Workplace Name:	
Emergency Contacts	
Emergency Services: 911	
Supervisor/Manager:	**Contact Info:**
First Aid Attendant(s):	**Contact Info:**
Other (if applicable):	**Contact Info:**
First Aid & Emergency Equipment	
First Aid Kit Location(s):	
AED Location (if available):	
Fire Extinguisher Location(s):	
Provide Worker with the following emergency procedures	
Evacuation Meeting Point: (Exact outdoor location, landmark, parking lot section)	
Fire Procedure (brief):	
Other Emergency Procedures: (Violence, medical emergency, extreme weather, power outage)	