



Improving Workplace Protection for New Workers

New Worker, High Risk!

If you are new at your job, your risk of injury is much greater than more experienced co-workers. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has reported that 40% of workers injured have been on the job less than one year.

Why are new workers more likely to be hurt? BLS studies show that employees injured at work often lack one vital tool to protect themselves: information. Take a look at the following data gathered by BLS in various surveys:

- of 724 workers hurt while using scaffolds, 27% said they received no information on safety requirements for installing the kind of scaffold on which they were injured.
- of 868 workers who suffered head injuries, 71% said they had no instruction concerning hard-hats.
- of 554 workers hurt while servicing equipment, 61% said they were not informed about lockout procedures.

In nearly every type of injury BLS researchers have studied, the same story is repeated over and over. Workers often do not receive the safety information they need—even on jobs involving dangerous equipment where training is clearly essential. In one BLS study of workers injured while operating power saws, nearly one of every five said no safety training on the equipment had been provided.

This problem deserves immediate attention from both the federal and private sectors. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) wants to work with workers, employers, and vocational schools to increase protection for new employees.

What Workers Can Do

- Be sure you understand all necessary safety measures before you start to work. If the explanation is unclear, ask again.
- Use what you learn – all the time.
- If respirators or other personal protective equipment are required, wear them consistently and maintain them properly. If guards are required on equipment make sure they are in place.
- Don't take short-cuts; follow safety and health instructions to the letter.

- Follow the hazard warnings on chemicals you use. Obtain further information from the material safety data sheet on hazardous chemicals.
- Ask your employer about emergency procedures and be prepared to follow them in the event of chemical spill or fire.

What Employers Can Do

- Make safety training an essential part of plant routine. OSHA standards require safety training for workers in many types of hazardous work. A comprehensive safety training program will assure compliance and can also pay off in reduced absenteeism, lower compensation costs, and increased efficiency.
- Use the free, penalty-free consultation service available in every state; consultants can help you design an effective safety program.

What OSHA Can Do

Safety and health experts are available at every state and federal OSHA office to answer questions from workers and employers. Don't know where the closest OSHA office is? Call an OSHA Regional Office listed under "U.S. Labor Department" in telephone directories for Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Kansas City, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco and Seattle. These offices can also refer you to the free on-site consultation service in your area.

- OSHA's Training Institute, 1555 Times Dr., Des Plaines, IL 60018, offers courses open to the public on safety and health in general industry and in construction. The Training Institute also conducts regional safety and health training sessions around the country. These sessions may be arranged through the Institute. Private sector personnel attending Institute courses are charged tuition. For more information or to obtain a course schedule, call the Registrar, 708/297-4913.