

## Protecting Young, New and Inexperienced Workers—and Why it Matters

Every year in Alberta, too many young workers suffer serious injuries or even lose their lives in the workplace. According to the Government of Alberta Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics Report from 2022, the fatality rate for young workers (aged 15 to 24 years old) have increased by over 200% from 2021 to 2022, rising from two to seven fatalities.

Based on research that examined the relation between job tenure and work injuries (2006), young and new workers face a higher risk of injury than any other age group within the first year of employment, regardless of industry. In Alberta's energy industry, young workers have had the highest workers' compensation claim rate of any demographic, dating back to the early 2000s [Alberta Claim Trend by Age Group, 2024](#).

This guide accompanies the **Worker Story** video and is designed to help you and your team:

- Introduce the topic of young, new and inexperienced worker safety.
- Provide effective engagement methods that are impactful yet respectful.
- Inspire education providers, safety professionals, human resources personnel, supervisors, and trainers to recognize their essential role in protecting new workers entering the workforce.



### Get the Most Out of this Video

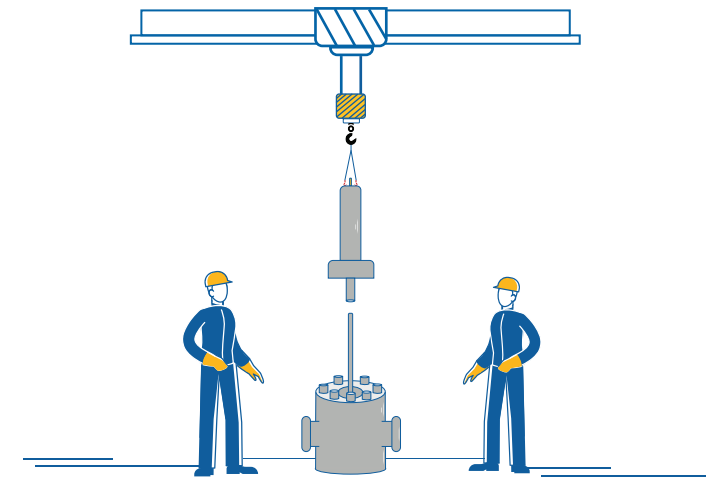
#### 01 Watch the Video

The video highlights the devastating impact of workplace fatalities on families, friends and the broader community. By learning from past tragedies and honouring the lives lost, we can work together to protect vulnerable workers starting new jobs.

#### 02 Ask: "How could this happen to us? What would you do in this situation?"

- Imagine you are onboarding a new worker on your team in a high hazard environment. What would you do?
- Does our current training or onboarding process address the risks associated with young, new and inexperienced workers?
- As the workforce diversifies, what additional measures should be implemented to mitigate their risks (e.g., mentoring, job shadowing, competency checks)?
- How can we set up young, new and inexperienced workers for success?

- How can we help new workers progress from novice to fully competent while avoiding overconfidence, especially in high hazard work?



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### 03 Share the Key Messages

#### A Fatality Impacts More Than Family:

The loss of a young worker has a ripple effect on family, friends and the community. Check out the [Psychological Health and Safety Resource Centre](#) or read [Safety Bulletin: Mental Health, What You Need to Know](#) for more information on how work impacts social connections, psychological safety, stress management and more.

#### Onboarding is About Building Competency:

The onboarding and training process must build competency to ensure young, new and inexperienced workers understand workplace safety risks and procedures. For more information on how to support new workers, visit [Safe Start for Greenhands Safety Toolkit](#).

#### Mentorship and Coaching Creates a Safe Working Environment:

Supervisors should actively monitor workers through mentorship and create a psychologically safe workplace culture for workers that allows them to ask questions and report hazards to encourage trust. For more information on Coaching and Mentoring, see [Safety Bulletin, Coaching and Mentoring Young Workers, Issue 05-2017](#)

#### Risk Perception and Tolerance:

Young, new and inexperienced workers are at a higher risk of workplace fatality or injury and high energy hazards must be identified to prevent incidents. For more on Hazard Recognition and Risk Mitigation, refer to the [Energy Wheel Resources](#) and the [Microlearning: A shift from Training to Risk Mitigation Webinar](#).

### 04 Discuss Real-Life Applications Within Your Work Environment:

- Do supervisors actively mentor new workers, provide guidance and encourage feedback and questions?
- Are we setting up new workers and their supervisors for success?
- How do we effectively transfer knowledge from experienced workers to young, new and inexperienced workers? Can you provide examples that your audience can relate to? Are there best practices that other teams in our organization could adopt?
- When recruiting young or inexperienced workers, how do we enhance onboarding to ensure their safety and development? Should we allocate resources (time, money, effort) to unlock their potential safely?
- Do our training and onboarding practices consider unique learning needs, generational differences or language barriers? Have we accounted for challenges such as literacy issues, English as an Additional Language, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or dyslexia?

### 05 Review Key Takeaways

- Regularly evaluate and improve onboarding and mentoring processes to prevent overwhelming new workers.
- Ensure training programs include proficiency checks, ongoing training and retraining to reinforce safe practices.
- Focus on creating a workplace culture/psychologically safe environment that encourages open dialogue, where:
  - Young and new workers feel comfortable raising concerns with supervisors and coworkers.
  - The fear of “looking stupid” or faking competence is recognized and addressed early.
  - Advancement is based on demonstrated proficiency, not just the need for more skilled workers.

For additional resources and information, visit [www.EnergySafetyCanada.com/resources](http://www.EnergySafetyCanada.com/resources).