

New, young and inexperienced workers are among the highest risk of injury at the workplace. This is due to the young workers' eagerness to please and their inherent nature to prove their value. Although young workers may pose a higher level of risk, they play a vital role in the industry. Young workers bring a refreshed sense of energy and curiosity, as well as they are the future of the workplace.

This means that as an employer, you must ensure that this group receives additional education and supervision to prevent them from being injured.

What is a Young Worker?

Young workers are defined in *The Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020 (OH&S Regs)* as anyone under the age of 16 with some additional restrictions for those as old as 18. Biologically speaking, anyone under the age of 25 should be considered a young worker for multiple reasons. These can include but are not limited to:

- Limited work experience
- High drive and willingness to prove self
- Limited safety and work ethic knowledge
- Their prefrontal cortex is still developing

Employers should develop a young workers program that aims to help educate this group on proper safety rules, work ethic and provide them adequate supervision.

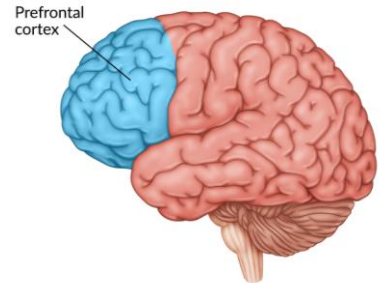
OH&S Regs 3-6(1)(a) – states that “*all work at a place of employment is sufficiently and competently supervised.*” Meaning you need someone who has the knowledge, training and experience to supervise.

Case Study

On February 19, 2021, a 20-year-old was asked to work off of a modified aerial work platform. This was a forklift fitted with a floor and backing with no rails/guards and no fall protection. The worker was raised 5m off the ground and fell. This caused them to suffer a fractured spine and become a quadriplegic for life.

Prefrontal Cortex Development

The prefrontal cortex is the last part of the brain to develop in the mid to late 20s. This part of the brain is responsible for skills such as planning, prioritizing and rational decision making. Since all three of these are required as a major part of staying safe on the worksite, young workers must be supervised adequately, trained properly on the requirements of the job, made aware of the potential and existing hazards on their worksite and be familiar with legislation applicable to their scope of work.



Young Workers Safety Program

When developing a young workers program for your workforce, it is important to keep the basics in mind. These should include:

- A proper orientation with a section highlighting the requirements of a young worker.
- A full site tour with instructions on control zones, temp roadways, and walkways, and where muster points / first aid kits are located.
- A formal introduction to their direct supervisor and co-workers. Review the expectations and requirements of each person.
- A full run-through of each tool and equipment they will be required to use. They must also prove competency before being allowed to operate these tools and equipment.
- A training schedule to review assigned tasks and ensure the young worker is competent in the tasks and remains supervised at all times.

Lastly, ensure all workers are made aware of their rights and responsibility to bring forward safety concerns and questions at any time. No worker shall be penalized for bringing safety concerns forward.