



## Vulnerable Workers - *Note, this safety talk is geared towards a Managerial or Safety Committee audience*

According to Safe Work Manitoba in the first four weeks of a new job, new workers are 5 to 7 times more likely to be at risk of injury. This makes the first few weeks of employment a critical time for employees and employers. Even though safety is a shared responsibility, the employer has the greatest legal responsibility to ensure the safety of all workers including vulnerable workers.



### **Vulnerable Workers** are defined as:

- Younger Workers ages 15-24
- Aging Workers 55+
- Workers with language barriers/limited literacy
- Temporary worker or new to the workforce or community (i.e., immigrant, returning worker, students, or workers with 1-2-year work experience)

## What's the Danger?

Vulnerable workers are at a greater risk of injury or illness in the workplace. Vulnerable workers often:

- look to leave a good impression on their manager or supervisor, leading to workers being reluctant to ask questions or refuse a task they may not be trained on.
- are hesitant to report injuries and illness in fear of consequences.
- are not aware of workplace hazards because this may be their first job, or the type of work is new.
- fear exercising worker rights or raising health and safety concerns over concern of losing their job or being perceived as incapable of doing the job.
- do not fully understand safe work procedures or policies, even more so if English is not their first language.
- become complacent due to completing a task for many years. At hiring, a safety program or orientation may not have been in place and shortcuts or not following procedures can occur without refresher training.

Having the appropriate resources, support and accommodations can help reduce the risk of incidents to vulnerable workers.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

When surveyed by SAFE Workers of Tomorrow, 1/3 of young workers said that they would not refuse to do work they considered unsafe.



## Safety Tips

- ✓ Provide safety orientations, additional job-specific training, and refresher training.
- ✓ Translate procedures into multiple languages to accommodate all employees.
- ✓ Include mentorship and job shadowing from an experienced worker in your training program
- ✓ Use of pictures, media, and pictograms throughout the workplace and in the safety management system.
- ✓ Show workers where to find safety information (i.e., online, safety binder, through the Worker Representative or Safety Committee, SDS binder, etc.).
- ✓ Update emergency features to include ramps, fire alarms with strobe lights, and add fire wardens to assist during evacuations.
- ✓ Ensure workers are aware of and understand their 4 Worker Rights – Right to Know, Right to Participate, Right to Refuse, and Right to Protection from Reprisal
- ✓ Keep communication lines open. Check-in with workers and encourage them to ask questions.
- ✓ Develop clearly written Safe Work Procedures to prevent injury in all ages of vulnerable workers.
- ✓ Consider improvements such as mechanical aids, workstation design, handrails, and adequate lighting.
- ✓ Promote active living, healthy eating, stress management, and work-life balance.

## Demonstrate

Review the process on how to report a safety concern.

Encourage workers to join in on safety and health activities or sit on the committee meetings.

Contact S2SA for templates and additional resources. These include a vulnerable workers policy guide, orientation checklist, vulnerable worker form, etc.

Refer to the Aging Manitoba Workforce initiatives for best practices to support aging workers and upcoming e-learning training. - [About Aging Manitoba Workforce - A Health and Safety Initiative - Resource and E-Learning Centre – Aging Manitoba Workforce \(agingworkforce.ca\)](#)

## Discussion

What are some ways we currently identify and support Vulnerable Workers? How can we improve support?

What are some ways we can assist Vulnerable Workers in the event of an emergency or evacuation?

What is the process for refusing unsafe work?

Are there any procedures or policies that we should provide refresher training on?



## Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation

Part 2 - General Duties

Workers Involved in this Safety Talk

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Signature

Name	Signature

Notes

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