

OSSA Young Worker blitz story: short and long versions
Long version: Advocate, 25 Feb 2010

Short version

MOL blitz focuses on those most vulnerable: youth

Inspectors expected to visit grocery, retail and restaurants this June through August

About 49,000 Ontario parents were contacted with news in 2004 that no parent should ever have to hear: their child had been injured on the job. For some of those parents, the news was worse.

[More than 49,000 young workers were injured](#) on the job in Ontario in 2004. And between 2001 and 2008, young workers aged 15 to 24 [sustained 573 critical injuries, and there were 27 fatalities](#).

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) will attempt, once again, to eliminate senseless tragedies like these by making young worker safety the focus of its enforcement blitz this June through August. Two of the most important things employers can do is:

- **Provide supervision:** [a U.S. study](#) found that 80 per cent of work-related injuries among adolescents occurred when no supervisor was present.
- **Focus on training:** an Institute for Work and Health Study found that [only one in five employees \(21%\) had received safety training](#) in their first year with a new employer (in Ontario, the rate was 28%).

Check out the [MOL's results from its young worker blitz in 2009](#) to find out where inspectors focused their time in 2009 and the types of violations that resulted in orders. Chances are, some of the same priorities will apply in 2010.

More about young worker safety and the MOL blitz in future issues of *The Advocate*. (Please note that musculoskeletal disorders will be the focus for the blitz this September.)

Here are the links:

More than 49,000 young workers were injured:

http://www.livesafeworksmart.net/english/fast_facts/index.htm

Sustained 573 critical injuries, and there were 27 fatalities:

<http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2009/05/19/c5171.html?lmatch=&lang=e.html>

A U.S. study: http://www.livesafeworksmart.net/english/fast_facts/index.htm

Only one in five employees (21%) had received safety training:

<http://www.iwh.on.ca/highlights/only-one-in-five-new-workers-receive-safety-training->

[in-canada](#)

Mol's results from its young worker blitz in 2009:

http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/blitzes/blitz_report7.php

Long version

MOL blitz focuses on those most vulnerable: youth

Inspectors expected to visit grocery, retail and restaurants this June through August

About 49,000 Ontario parents were contacted with news in 2004 that no parent should ever have to hear: their child had been injured on the job. For some of those parents, that phone call or knock on the door marked the beginning of a lifelong struggle to cope with loss on an epic scale; their son or daughter would never come home again. The Ministry of Labour (MOL) will attempt, once again, to eliminate senseless tragedies like these by making young worker safety the focus of its enforcement blitz this June through August. Find out what one bereaved dad says is the most important thing an employer of young workers can do.

[More than 49,000 young workers were injured](#) on the job in Ontario in 2004. Another statistic: between 2001 and 2008, young workers aged 15 to 24 [sustained 573 critical injuries, and there were 27 fatalities](#).

Young worker safety is especially urgent for the service sector, since the majority of young workers—inexperienced, eager to please and certain that risk does not apply to them—find their first jobs in the grocery, retail and restaurant industries. The MOL is expected to focus its attention on these industries during the June to August blitz.

[According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board \(WSIB\)](#), young workers employed in occupations such as sales and service, transport/equipment operators, and labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities, had the highest number of allowed lost-time claims for on-the-job injuries.

Supervision and training: two effective strategies

Rob Ellis, president of [Our Youth at Work](#), and a former president of a business servicing the food and restaurant industry, lost his 18-year-old son, David, to a preventable workplace incident over ten years ago. It was David's second day at work, which illustrates a heartbreaking truth: workers who are new to a job are five times more likely to be injured in the first month.

Lack of supervision and training are two factors that contribute to workplace injury in young workers. [A U.S. study](#) found that 80 per cent of work-related injuries among

adolescents occurred when no supervisor was present. Also, an Institute for Work and Health Study found that [only one in five employees \(21%\) had received safety training](#) in their first year with a new employer (in Ontario, the rate was 28%).

Ellis urges employers to “show new workers every possible place where they might slip, fall, or get cut or burned. There’s no need to hand out a thick training manual. Just set up a really good buddy system. Make the buddy responsible for never leaving a new worker’s side—especially in the first 30 days when most of the injuries occur.”

What makes them tick?

Concerned employers look past the stereotypes to find out where young workers’ behaviour comes from, and use that insight to set clear expectations. For example, young workers have grown up listening to their parents tell them to enjoy life now and focus on careers later. No wonder they are putting their social lives first, with a vengeance. The lesson for employers: an authoritarian approach won’t work with this generation. Engage young people by finding ways to make work and health and safety more rewarding; ask them for help in figuring it out. Volkswagen calls it the “[fun theory](#),” pointing out that “something as simple as fun is the easiest way to change people’s behaviour for the better.”

Check out last year’s blitz results

Sometimes the view out the rear-view mirror will help anticipate what’s in store out the windshield. Check out the [MOL’s results from its young worker blitz in 2009](#) to find out where inspectors focused their time in 2009 and the types of violations that resulted in orders. Chances are, some of the same priorities will apply in 2010.

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Our Youth At Work: <http://www.mysafework.com/>

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[in-canada](#)

fun theory: <http://www.thefuntheory.com/>

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http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/blitzes/blitz_report7.php