

NEW EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

Improving Workplace Protection for New Workers

If you are new at your job, your risk of injury is much greater than for 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.

