Let’s face it. It takes time and money to train new workers. But as an employer, it’s your responsibility to ensure that the workplace is a healthy and safe one and that workers are provided with the information, instruction, and supervision they need to protect themselves against potential hazards.

New workers of any age are at increased risk for workplace injuries. Studies have shown that they are four times more likely to be injured in the first four weeks of a new job than at any other time.

There are several reasons why new workers may be particularly at risk.

• They may lack the experience and training to recognize and avoid hazards.
• They may not know their rights.
• They aren’t properly supervised.
• They haven’t received adequate orientation.

New workers are often considered young workers, but a new worker can be any newly hired worker or a current worker who has been assigned new tasks. Every worksite is different and each company has its own set of safety procedures that they expect workers to follow.

Here are some key steps that you can take to ensure new workers have all the information and instruction needed to protect themselves and those around them.

1. Conduct an employee orientation

Develop an orientation checklist for new workers and review it with them before they start work. The checklist can include such things as:

- the location of first-aid facilities and fire equipment
- emergency procedures
- procedures for reporting an injury or a hazard
- names of the Health and Safety Representative or Joint Health and Safety Committee members
- a list of potential hazards and procedures to avoid them
- a list of training the worker has already done and what they still need to do.

There’s a sample orientation checklist in IHSA’s Contractor Toolkit (B045). Download it from the IHSA website and customize it to suit your needs.

2. Review the company’s health & safety policy and program

A workplace with more than five employees is legally required to have a written health & safety policy and a program to implement it. Review the program with new workers so that they know what’s expected of them. Make sure you enforce the program. If a new worker sees others disobeying the safety rules, he or she will likely disobey them as well.

Policy and Program Resources

To develop or update your company’s health and safety policy and program, visit IHSA’s Policy and Program web page. You can download sample documents and templates and tailor them to your workplace.

Did You Know?

From May 1st until the end of August, Ontario’s Ministry of Labour is conducting a safety blitz focusing on new and young workers. For more info about the blitz and helpful resources, visit IHSA’s New and Young Workers web page.
3. **Tell new workers their rights**

Workers who know their rights will be less likely to put themselves in unsafe situations. The Occupational Health and Safety Act gives workers three basic rights:

- **The right to know**
  Workers have the right to know what hazards exist in their workplace and how to protect themselves.

- **The right to participate**
  Workers have the right to participate in making their workplace safe and healthy (e.g., joining a Joint Health and Safety Committee).

- **The right to refuse unsafe work**
  If a worker feels a job is unsafe and the employer does not address it, the worker has the right to refuse to do the work without fear of reprisals.

4. **Tell new workers their responsibilities**

Explain that they have a duty to protect themselves and their co-workers. Workers must

- comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and any relevant regulations
- follow the rules set down in the company’s health and safety policy and program
- report any hazards to their supervisor
- use machines and equipment properly (e.g., wear the correct protective equipment).

5. **Provide training**

Keep a record of any training workers have previously received and make arrangements for them to take any workplace-specific training they will require. Make sure the training is up to date. In some cases, recertification may be necessary.

6. **Identify hazards**

Keep an up-to-date list of hazards at the workplace and bring them to the attention of the new worker. Suggest ways that the worker can avoid these hazards. Conditions can change at any time, so check the worksite and equipment regularly.

7. **Give clear instructions**

Explain tasks so that the new worker understands not only what to do, but also how to do it safely. It’s better to demonstrate how to do a job properly rather than just telling. Ask the worker to repeat your instructions back to you to make sure he or she understands. Often a new worker will be hesitant to ask questions, so encourage open communication. Ask the worker for feedback.

8. **Supervise new workers**

Assign a competent worker to monitor a new worker’s performance for the first few days on the job. This way, you can determine if the worker has understood and is applying your instructions. A new worker may be more likely to ask a co-worker for advice if he or she is not sure how to complete a task properly.

9. **Lead by example**

If you create an atmosphere of safety in the workplace, workers—especially new workers—will follow your lead. Find ways to remind workers daily about the importance of safety, such as conducting 5-minute safety talks in the morning before workers begin a task.

For a wealth of information you can use with new workers, visit [www.ihsa.ca](http://www.ihsa.ca).