

# Right to Know Act of 1983

The Employee Right to Know Act was passed by the State Legislature during the 1983 session and is enforced as part of the Occupational Safety and Health program in the Department of Labor and Industry. The Employee Right to Know Act is intended to ensure that employees are aware of the dangers associated with hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, or infectious agents that they may be exposed to in their workplaces. The Act requires employers to evaluate their workplaces for the presence of hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, and infectious agents and to provide training to employees concerning those substances or agents to which employees may be exposed.

Written information on hazardous substances, harmful physical agents or infectious agents must be readily accessible to employees. Employees have a conditional right to refuse to work under imminent danger conditions or if the required information and training are not provided by the employer. Labeling requirements for containers of hazardous substances and equipment or work areas that generate physical agents are also part of the Act.

## Safety, Emergency Procedures and Workers Compensation

### Safety

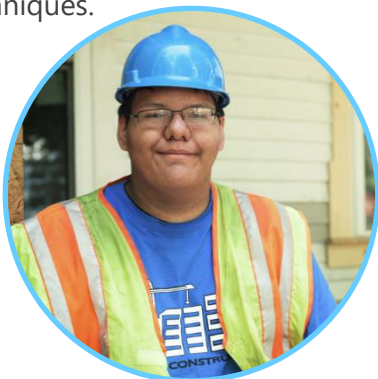
Step Up interns need guidance to work safely. Their inexperience counts against them. In fact, workers with less than one-year of work experience account for almost one-third of the occupational injuries every year. Take these 3 steps to help prepare youth to work safely.

#### 1. Train Interns to Put Safety First.

Supervisors can help compensate for inexperience by showing interns how to do the job correctly. What may be obvious to an adult may not be so clear to an intern tackling a task for the first time. Training interns to work safely is a multi-step process:

- Give them clear instructions and tell them what safety precautions to take.
- Ask them to repeat your instructions and encourage them to ask questions.
- Show them how to perform the task. For example, demonstrate proper lifting techniques, if lifting is required at your worksite. Then watch them while they do it, correcting any mistakes.
- Teach interns about wearing proper clothing and shoes for the tasks required and the environment they will be working in.
- If the interns work outside, teach them about being prepared for the weather, staying hydrated, keeping cool, and taking breaks.
- Finally, ask if they have any additional questions.

It is important to point out the potential safety hazards of horseplay and fighting, inattention, and improper lifting techniques.



#### 2. Show Interns How to Use Safety Equipment.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) prohibits young workers from doing tasks identified as particularly hazardous, including operating heavy equipment, using meat slicing machines, working late at night, and using certain power tools. FLSA does not eliminate every potential hazard, however, and some workers may still need to wear protective equipment

such as safety shoes, hard hats, or gloves, depending on the nature of their work. If safety gear is required, be sure that workers know when they need to wear it, where to find it, how to use it, and how to care for it.

In other cases, teens may simply need to know about the safety features of equipment or facilities. For example, they may need to be aware that they must keep exit doors free from clutter.

### 3. Prepare Interns for Emergencies.

Every worker needs to be ready to handle an emergency. Prepare your youth to escape a fire by pointing out exit locations and evacuation routes. Interns also need to know who to report to if an injury occurs or if they need first aid or medical care. Minneapolis Employment and Training has workers' compensation insurance to cover Step Up interns. It is imperative that reports of injury are made quickly (**within 24 hours**) and that the following procedures are followed to assure injured workers that neither they nor their families are harassed to pay any medical bills that may be incurred.



If the injury appears life threatening or if you have any questions as to the severity of the injury, call 911.

## Emergency Procedures

Assess the severity of the injury. You should refer an injured employee for medical care who has:

- Significant injuries, i.e. eye injuries, burns, suspected broken bones, uncontrolled bleeding, head injuries, chest pain, or breathing problems.
- Back/neck strains and other moderately painful muscle strains. Muscle pain usually peaks within 24-48 hours after injury.
- Any injury that results in lost work time.
- Or any injured employee who requests medical care. (If the injury/illness is NOT work-related, the employee should treat with his/her own doctor.) If you are unsure whether an employee should be seen by a doctor, discuss the situation with Tammy Dickinson at 612-673-5041.

- Contact the parent or guardian to inform them of the injury. This information should be at the worksite on an Emergency Contact List.
- Contact Tammy Dickinson at 612-673-5041 to let her know that an injury has occurred and to expect a First Report of Injury form.

## When an Employee Returns to Work After an Injury

- Call Tammy Dickinson at 612-673-5041 to let Minneapolis Employment and Training know that the intern has returned to work. Scan and email a copy of the workability report or note to Tammy at [Tammy.Dickinson@Minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Tammy.Dickinson@Minneapolismn.gov) as soon as the employee returns to work. All visits to a hospital or clinic must be followed with a workability report or a signed note from the physician.
- Review the workability report or the physician's note and let the employee know what they can do, based on the report.
- Find safe work for the employee, based on the restrictions. Please notify Minneapolis Employment and Training if you cannot find, or if you run out of, safe, transitional work for the intern.

If an intern misses scheduled work time to go to a follow-up doctor's visit for a worker's compensation claim, they should be paid for the time missed as if they were at work.

**As the intern's supervisor, you must be available to answer questions and provide needed follow-through with all claims until they are completed, including after the summer program has concluded.**

If an employee states that they cannot work at any time during their recovery, they must be seen by the doctor that day to determine if the employee needs more restrictions or a change in treatment. Benefits are not paid unless time off is authorized by the physician. Supervisors should not send an employee home without first sending them to a health care provider.



Notify Minneapolis Employment and Training if any of the following situations occur:

- If an intern leaves work early but isn't seen by a physician the same day.
- If you have to send an intern back to the doctor because s/he cannot work because of pain or cannot physically do the job because of the injury.
- To discuss a plan of action if the intern is taken off work completely or is having difficulty performing the transitional job.
- To discuss disciplinary action or potential termination of any injured employee.

**Never discipline an injured employee without speaking with Minneapolis Employment and Training first!**

## General Suggestions When Handling Work Injuries

If an intern reports an injury that you don't think really happened, should you report it?

Yes, filing a First Report of Injury is not an admission of liability. It is NOT up to you to decide if an injury is work-related; you just have to report it. By law, you must report any incident claimed to be work related by the employee.

However, be sure to inform Minneapolis Employment and Training of your concerns. Be as specific as possible. Gather documentation including signed statements from witnesses. Any information you can provide will help in determining whether the claim should be paid.

## Communicate with Minneapolis Employment and Training

There is no such thing as too much communication when it comes to an injury. Make sure that Minneapolis Employment and Training is aware that an employee has been injured as soon as possible.

Tammy Dickinson is the Worker's Compensation representative for Minneapolis Employment and Training. She can be reached at 612-673-5041. She is available to answer your questions and walk you through the process.

