



Why Does Workplace Health and Safety Matter?

This Activity at a Glance

This Lesson is adapted from Youth @ Work, Lesson 1, by the Labor Occupational Health Program, UC Berkeley (www.lohp.org) and from Lost Youth Discussion Guide, Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia (www.WorkSafebc.com).

In this activity students watch and discuss a hard-hitting video that shares the stories of four young people whose lives were permanently changed by a workplace injury. This activity provides an introduction to further education on teens' workplace rights and protections, and how to prevent being injured at work.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe the impact work injuries can have on a person's life
- Identify the main messages in a video on young worker injuries
- Identify three things young workers can do to prevent being injured at work

Materials Needed

- *Lost Youth* video/DVD—The original version has some graphic language. An “Edited” Version is also available, with those quotes removed. The video can be viewed at: <http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/default.asp>

Alternately, it can be purchased from the Worksafe BC website. Just follow the “Buy or Borrow Videos” link at their website (above) for more information.

Or, you can access it on You Tube: www.youtube.com. Put these words in the search box: lost youth worksafe bc. Both versions (“Full” and “Edited”) are available.

- Internet-connected computer with large screen or LCD projector, or a VCR or DVD player.

Total Class Time: 60 minutes

Preparing To Teach This Lesson

Before you present Lesson One:

1. Preview the video “Lost Youth” and read through these tips to help prepare the viewers. The video contains coarse language and graphic reenactments of four workplace injuries.

Instructor’s Notes

A. Introduction

(10 minutes)

1. Explain that the class will be watching a video about the real-life stories of teens who have been injured at work.

2. As a warm-up discussion, ask students:

“How many of you have ever had a job?”

“What kinds of places have you worked?”

“What do you or did you actually do?”

“Have you ever been hurt at work, or do you know someone who was?”

3. Let the class briefly discuss their answers. The questions are designed to get students thinking about safety issues in their own job experience.

4. Ask students:

“Who do you think is most at risk of being injured at work?”

- Workers are at the greatest risk of getting injured during their first six months on the job.
- 40% of all work injuries occur during the first year on the job.
- Young workers are more likely to be injured on the job than adult workers, despite the fact that youth under 18 years old are prohibited from doing the most dangerous kinds of work.
- Young men are more likely to be injured on the job than any other group of workers.

“Why do you think new and young workers are at greater risk of injury?”

- New and young workers often don’t receive adequate health and safety training.
- New and young workers are less likely to speak up and question what they are being asked to do. They want to prove themselves.

- New and young workers lack experience in that job.
- Workers, especially young workers and immigrant workers, may not know what their rights are on the job.

Students do not need to bring up all of these answers. You can complete this discussion and bring out more of these points after watching the video.

B. Introduce the video, *Lost Youth*.

(5 minutes)

1. Explain how the video was produced and the format that is used. Be sure to caution viewers about the coarse language and the graphic nature of the accident recreations.

About *Lost Youth*

The video was developed using research conducted with injured young workers in Canada. These workers advised that a true-to-life video based on “real-life stories—graphic, shocking, and really in your face” —would have the greatest impact and credibility among young people. Injured young workers also commented that youth tend to “tune out” safety messages because they think, “That could never happen to me.” Nevertheless, the injured young workers also commented that the more often a message is conveyed and the more realistic it is, the more likely it will connect with youth.

Lost Youth was developed without a script, and features the true stories of four injured young workers whose lives have been permanently changed by their workplace accidents. In this docu-drama format, Michael, Jennifer, John, and Nick talk emotionally about learning to live with the aftermath of their workplace accidents. Their parents speak about their children’s shattered bodies and dreams. To add to the sense of reality, the accident scenes were recreated with the help of the special effects crew from the X-Files television show.

Lost Youth: Four Stories of Injured Young Workers was produced by the Workers’ Compensation Board of British Columbia in partnership with the Youth Initiatives Unit of Human Resources and Development Canada—B.C./Yukon Regional Office.

2. To help set the stage for viewing the video, introduce viewers to the four injured young workers. We grateful to these courageous young people and their families for sharing their stories in the hope that they can prevent other youth from being injured or killed in the workplace.

Who are the youth featured in the video?

Michael, Jennifer, John, and Nick represent all seriously injured young workers in B.C. They live every day with the consequences of workplace accidents. All four were still in their teens when they were injured. None were properly trained to deal with hazards and risks at their workplaces. And while their accidents and injuries were different, these brave young people share the same loss—the loss of their youth.

- Michael crushed his leg in a sawmill machine. Once an athletic guy known as “Mr. Active,” Michael wears a prosthetic today and can’t walk 10 minutes without a rest. He lives in constant pain.
- Jennifer lost three fingers in a pizza dough maker. This confident young woman now self-consciously covers her hand when she talks.
- John and Nick broke their backs in forklift accidents. John’s days of shooting hoops are now replaced with days of shooting pains. Nick spends most of his time in a wheelchair.

Through one-on-one discussion with these young people and their parents, and dramatic recreations of their accidents, *Lost Youth* tells the compelling story of lives forever altered.

C. Prepare the viewers and show the video.

(20 minutes)

1. Explain that the video is 17 minutes long and contains coarse language and graphic scenes. Remind viewers that while the accident scenes are recreations and not real. You may want to suggest that if viewers are upset by the reality of the video, they can look away during the accident scenes, which come toward the end of the video, or leave the room.

Because of the strong impact of the video, many viewers will be deeply affected and you may need to give them some time to reflect on that they have seen.

Note: The youth in this video are all doing work that is prohibited for young workers under age 18 under U.S. child labor laws (using a forklift, using machinery); Canada does not have labor laws that prohibit youth from doing this kind of work.

D. Discuss the issues raised by the video.

(20 minutes)

1. Give viewers a moment to reflect on what they have seen and heard before talking further about the video.
2. Use the discussion questions below to begin a conversation about the video and the issue of young worker health and safety.

“What are some of the reasons Michael, Jennifer, John, and Nick were injured at work?”

Possible answers:

- Lack of training
- Inexperience
- They didn’t ask questions or ask for help.
- They did things that were unsafe because they saw other workers doing them.

“What safety messages were conveyed?”

Possible answers:

- Don’t do work that seems unsafe, even if other workers are doing it.
- Ask to be trained about safe work procedures and how to recognize on-the-job hazards.
- Follow safe procedures and encourage others to do so.
- Know your workplace health and safety rights and responsibilities.
- Ask questions if you are uncertain about anything.

“What role does the employer play in keeping workers safe at work?”

Possible answers:

- Know and comply with health and safety and child labor laws.
- Provide comprehensive training and make sure that workers, especially new and young workers, are appropriately supervised.
- Create a workplace culture that encourages workers, especially new and young workers, to ask questions about any health and safety concern they may have.

“What role does the worker play in keeping himself or herself safe at work?”

Possible answers:

- Ask to be trained about safe work procedures and how to recognize on-the-job hazards.
- Follow safe procedures and encourage others to do so.
- Know your workplace health and safety rights and responsibilities.
- Ask questions if you are uncertain about anything.

“What is the most important thing you learned from this video? What do you think the video is trying to get you to do?”

Possible answers:

- I need to watch out for myself: ask questions, speak up, and get training.
- This is something that can happen to me.
- As a parent, I need to talk to my child about their work.
- New and young workers are at higher risk of workplace injuries than other workers.
- Workplace injuries can be serious and permanent.

E. Conclusion

(5 minutes)

Use this introductory activity to lead into additional training on workplace health and safety. Download additional activities from previous years’ Safe Jobs for Youth Month Kits at www.youngworkers.org.