



Summer Safety for the Seasonal Worker

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June 2021

Many people look forward to summer, but for employers the summer season is not exactly “fun in the sun.” Summer brings with it an increased (and oftentimes younger) workforce, hot temperatures, hazardous job tasks, and simply more plates to juggle for supervisors. In addition, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workplace injuries are at their highest during the summer months. These facts present employers with a few challenges.

Challenge #1:

With the increased number of seasonal hires, supervisors and HR departments are tasked with providing thorough yet efficient safety orientations to a larger number of workers. And since these workers are usually only on staff for 3-5 months, it may be tempting to skim over topics that otherwise would be covered in great depth. Regardless, employers must:

- Train each employee 1) in a language and format they can understand 2) on the hazards to which they are exposed, and 3) to a depth that aligns with the individual’s job description and specific exposures.
- Train employees prior to initial assignment and conduct refresher training throughout the season. Orientations can present a lot of information all at once, which can be overwhelming for some and may cause forgetfulness. Increase the amount of tailgate talks and in-service training throughout the summer season.
- Ensure a full understanding of each topic by including time during training sessions for question and answer and a knowledge check. This could be in the form of a written quiz, hands-on observation, or discussion.
- Document all training with the topics covered and those in attendance.
- Track training attendance to ensure that all new hires receive the required amount of training.
- Consider pairing up new employees with veteran staff for a shadowing opportunity before the new employee is cleared to work independently.

Challenge #2:

The summer workforce is likely younger than the year-round employee. Therefore, safety topics may be completely new to some – not to mention, attention spans are shortening all the time. Supervisors must determine the best methods for safety training while keeping the employee engaged and leaving with an actual understanding of the topic. See [OSHA’s resource for young workers](#) for some ideas on training this type of employee.

Furthermore, younger workers have restrictions when it comes to work hours and tasks. In fact, there are [26 prohibited occupations](#) for minors in Illinois. Do you know what they are?

Challenge #3:

Employers are seeing more and more retired workers returning to the workforce in a seasonal capacity. Consider if pre-employment physicals are a good investment for the more strenuous job tasks. Focus on injury prevention techniques such as stretching, warmups, frequent “micro breaks,” job rotation, and mechanical assistance for the older workers. See [IRMA’s Injury Prevention Page](#) for more resources.

Challenge #4:

Summer workers are exposed to a variety of hazards throughout their employment. Hazards unique to summer should be included in a thorough safety orientation:

- Heat-related illnesses
- Sun exposure
- Severe weather
- Insect-borne illnesses
- Poisonous plants

Do not forget to cover common hazards as well. Younger workers especially may never have been trained on topics such as back safety and injury prevention, general job site hazards, or fleet safety. Evaluate training plans and agendas to include all topics necessary to create a safe environment for workers.

Challenge #5:

Finally, summer workers may require more supervision and behavior observations that the year-round worker. Consider how this can be accomplished with the resources available to you. If the department supervisor is stretched thin, is it possible to train up a seasoned employee as a “crew leader” for the summer? Regardless, the more opportunities for observation and coaching the better for the unseasoned worker. Evaluate your Behavior Observation Program and see [IRMA’s Model Behavior Observation Program](#) for ideas on how to make the most of this program.

Other helpful resources:

[IRMA Critical Days of Summer Training](#)

[Safety and Health Magazine – Seasonal Safety Topics](#)

[CoastalFlix e-Learning Trainings: Seasonal Employee Orientation](#)