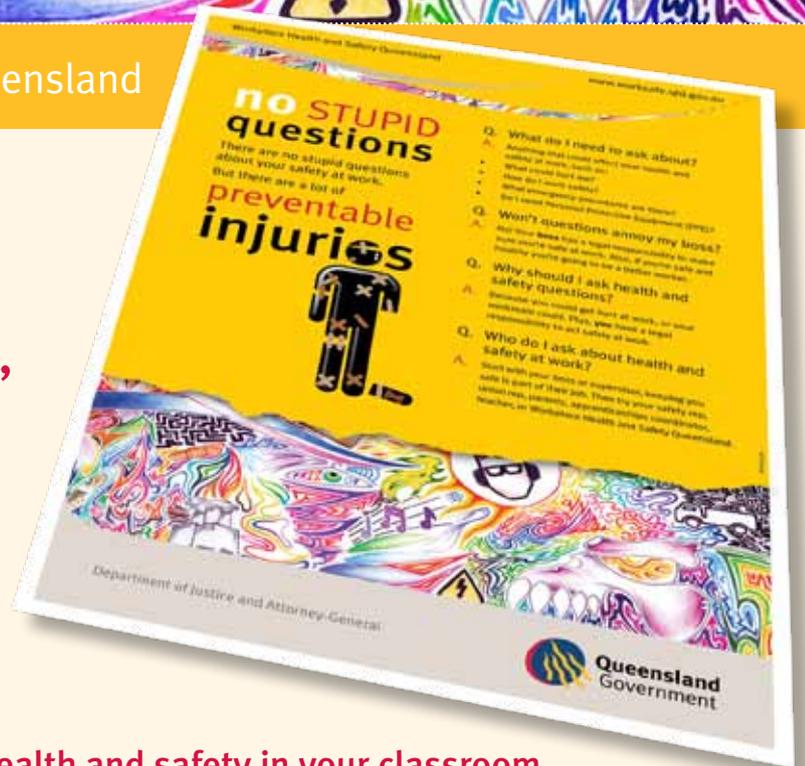


# NO STUPID questions

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Tips for teachers using the 'no stupid questions' young workers poster and safety pointer in classrooms



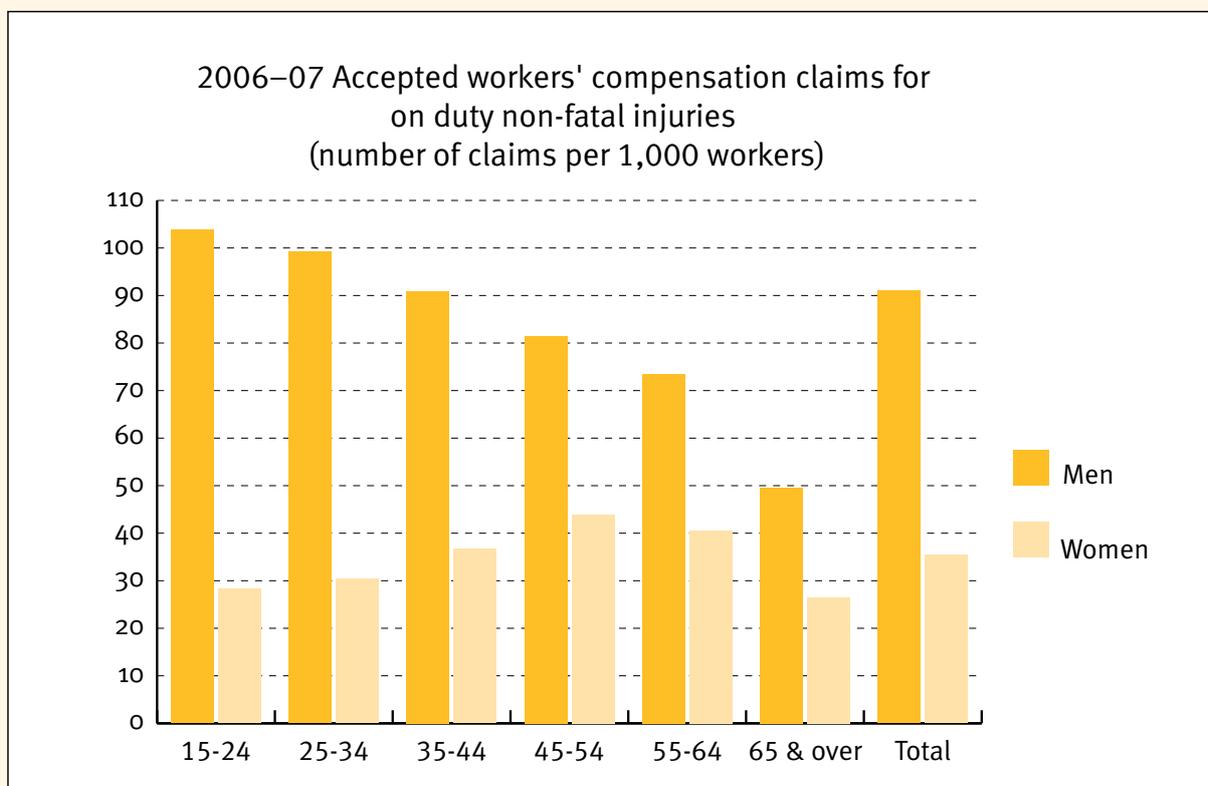
Thank you for discussing workplace health and safety in your classroom

Safety at work is an issue that concerns everyone: employers, employees, their families and the community. Each year in Queensland, work-related injury and illness are estimated to cost the community more than \$5.2 billion and claim approximately 100 lives<sup>1</sup>; that is a third of Queensland's road toll.

Young workers are at high risk of injury and illness at work. You would think that incidents at work would not discriminate, that regardless of gender, age or race, people would all have an equal risk of being injured at work. Unfortunately that is not the case.

<sup>1</sup> (2006). Queensland Workers' Compensations Scheme Statistics Reporting 2003-04 and The Costs of Workplace and Illness in Queensland — Workplace Health and Safety Queensland 2005-06.

If you are a young male you are more likely than anyone else to get injured or an illness at work, as the following injury statistics demonstrate:



To assist young workers to work safely and to come home safely, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has produced a range of materials designed specifically for young workers.

These materials promote discussion, create an interest in and awareness of workplace health and safety, and provide practical and straight-forward information on how to manage their own safety at work.

The young workers materials encourage young people to do four things:

- ask questions
- get training
- wear personal protective equipment (PPE)
- refuse unsafe work.

### A little more about why young workers are at a high risk of workplace injury and illness

Young workers have a number of unique physical and mental characteristics that may contribute to their high workplace injury rates. These characteristics include:

- their bodies maturing more quickly than their minds, emotional skills and social skills
- high risk thresholds and feelings of invulnerability
- rapid, irregular physical growth and body changes that may cause uncoordinated movements (interestingly, 'hit and being hit' is by far the leading mechanism of injury for young workers)
- lower levels of endurance, strength and flexibility.

Young workers are also relatively new to the workforce, meaning they have low levels of experience and are often unsure of their rights and responsibilities.

## Possible curriculum links

Workplace health and safety naturally sits within vocational subjects, and should be included in preparation for work experience placements. It can also be successfully integrated as a meaningful topic in a number of other subject areas including:

Key learning area	Organisers	Related workplace health and safety elements
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking and listening</li> <li>• Reading and viewing</li> <li>• Writing and designing</li> <li>• Language elements</li> <li>• Literary and non-literary texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace negotiations</li> <li>• Consultation between management and staff</li> <li>• Presenting safety information and training including the creation of information products</li> <li>• Incident investigations including interviewing witnesses and writing reports</li> </ul>
Health and physical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Physical activity</li> <li>• Personal development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychosocial impacts of work including hazards, risk factors and their management</li> <li>• Influence of environment on health, including workplace design, work processes and materials used</li> <li>• Workplace health and safety promotion in workplaces and the community</li> <li>• Fitness for work</li> <li>• Musculoskeletal disorder awareness</li> <li>• Communication and negotiation</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number</li> <li>• Algebra</li> <li>• Measurement</li> <li>• Chance and data</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement of force, noise, exposure, time, weight, height, length, speed, repetitions and other factors in workplaces and work tasks</li> <li>• Conversion of measurements to determine control measures and acceptable exposure in a workplace</li> <li>• Gathering, analysis and presentation of data, such as injury rates</li> <li>• Mapping of workplaces, work tasks, emergency procedures</li> </ul>
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science as a human endeavour</li> <li>• Earth and beyond</li> <li>• Energy and change</li> <li>• Life and living</li> <li>• Natural and processed materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of the impact of scientific advancement on work and workplace health and safety</li> <li>• Examination of the impact of man made products on the human body</li> <li>• Studies of force and motion in work tasks</li> <li>• Classification of substances used in workplaces</li> <li>• Properties of hazardous materials, including reaction rate, factors affecting safe storage and use, creation of hazardous materials through mixing other materials (eg. cleaning products)</li> <li>• Practical use of PPE</li> </ul>

Key learning area	Organisers	Related workplace health and safety elements
Studies of Society and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time, continuity and change</li> <li>• Place and space</li> <li>• Culture and identity</li> <li>• Political and economic systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of social and political changes on the workplace, including changes in work tasks, work demands and workplace health and safety</li> <li>• Examination of power relations in workplaces and the political system</li> <li>• Economic impacts of workplace health and safety</li> <li>• Government regulation of workplace health and safety</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology as a human endeavour</li> <li>• Information, materials and systems (resources)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of technology on work, including workplaces, work processes and work tasks</li> <li>• Hazards and risks reduced through technology</li> <li>• Hazards and risks introduced by technology</li> <li>• Workplace health and safety and new technology (e.g. nanotechnology), predicting impacts, hazards and risks, regulating and managing the unknown</li> <li>• The relationship between product design, the supply chain and workplace health and safety</li> </ul>
The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Visual art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role playing workplace negotiations, outcomes of workplace injury, illness or death on a workplace, family and the community</li> <li>• Design of workplace health and safety information products, including safety signage and media reports.</li> </ul>

*(Based on the Year Nine Essential Learnings in the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework)*

This list is not the result of a formal curriculum mapping exercise and is by no means exhaustive. However, it may encourage you to consider using workplace health and safety as a topic for integrated learning under the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework.

# Discussion guidance

The safety pointer aims to:

- raise awareness of workplace health and safety amongst young workers
- promote asking questions about workplace health and safety as a good thing to do
- encourage young workers to ask questions about their safety at work.

## Who do I ask about health and safety at work?

Start with your boss or supervisor, keeping you safe is part of their job. Then try your safety representative, human resources officer, union representative, parents, apprenticeship coordinator, teacher, or Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

## What do I need to ask about?

Anything that could affect your health and safety at work, like:

- What could hurt me? (What are the hazards and risks with this job?)
- How do I work safely?
- Will I receive training?
- What emergency procedures are there?
- Do I need personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- Who do I ask if I have a question or problem?
- How do I report hazards?
- What do I do if I get hurt?
- What are my health and safety responsibilities?
- Who do I ask if I have a health or safety question?

## When do I need to ask about my health and safety?

- When you start a new job.
- Before you do a new task.
- When there is a change to your workplace, like new conditions, new systems of work and new equipment.
- When you're confused.
- When you spot something dangerous or something that could be dangerous (a hazard or risk).

## When should I ask my boss about my safety?

You can ask about your health and safety anytime, like before a shift starts, when you're confused or concerned, or at staff meetings / safety meetings.

If your question is not urgent it might help to watch for when your boss is most likely to have some time to talk to you, if you work in hospitality then maybe it's best to ask before or after the meal time rush, if you work in an office then maybe lunch is the best time to ask.

## Where can I get information about my health and safety?

Every workplace is different, so asking your boss or supervisor about things specific to your job and your workplace is the best place to start.

There are a lot of other places you can go if you don't get the information or assistance you need once you've talked to your boss:

- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) – provides information about workplace health and safety online ([www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)), over the phone (1300 369 915) or in person. WHSQ is the regulator for workplace health and safety in Queensland, so as well as providing information they can investigate incidents or complaints.
- unions – union members can seek workplace health and safety advice and assistance from their union.
- Workplace Health and Safety Officers (WHSO), Workplace Health and Safety Representative (WHSR) – any workplace with over 30 employees must have a WHSO. WHSOs provide expert advice to employers to help them meet their obligations under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and are trained to identify health and safety hazards and help manage risks in the workplace. Many workplaces also have WHSRs. A WHSR is elected by their work mates and also offers advice on managing health and safety in the workplace.
- industry associations – industry associations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland offer a range of workplace health and safety resources, training and other services.
- apprenticeship provider – if you are an apprentice your training provider should or can provide advice and assistance to manage your health and safety at work
- schools and TAFEs
- your doctor
- parents and family members.

## How should I ask?

The best way to ask about your health and safety will depend on your workplace. Asking face-to-face is best if you can, that way you can get feedback, ask for clarification and demonstrations until you are confident.

Try some of these questions:

- Could you please repeat that for me?
- Could you slow down a bit when you explain how to do that? I want to make sure I know how to do it right.
- I'm not sure how this works, could you spare a few minutes to show me again?
- I think I've got the hang of this, but can you watch to make sure I'm doing everything right?
- I really want to make sure I do this job right. What should I know about doing it safely?
- I need some training to do this job. Any suggestions?
- I'm still a bit uncomfortable with this, would you mind explaining it / showing me again?

## Why should I ask questions?

Because you could get hurt at work, or a workmate could. Plus, you have a legal responsibility to act safely at work.

## Possible classroom activities

These activities may be completed individually, in small groups or as a whole class depending on the needs of your students and your preferred teaching style.

### Role plays

Assign students to be employers and employees in a fictitious business. Ask the employee students to act out the conversation they would have about health and safety on their first day of work or when they were assigned a new task. Have employer students respond in a number of different ways (positive, disinterested, annoyed). Rotate roles so that all students get to play the employee and employer.

### Favourite five

Brainstorm a list of questions that students might ask about their health and safety at work. Include the questions in the 'Discussion guidance' section if required. Ask students to choose the five most important questions and then devise a way to present these to other young people. Students may like to create posters, websites, songs or other resources.

### Newspaper scan

Have students search newspapers, either physically or online, for stories about workplace incidents. Record and discuss the type of incident and the outcome. Brainstorm questions that students would like to ask if they were investigating the incident. Brainstorm questions that the worker or workers involved might have asked to help prevent the incident.

### Interviewing workers

Create a set of interview questions about workplace health and safety for students to ask a parent, family member or friend who is employed to discover more about the risks in their job and how they manage them.

### Famous failures

Ask students to research and report on a famous workplace health and safety failure. International events like Chernobyl, Australian events like the Beaconsfield mine disaster, events in popular culture like the death of Brandon Lee while filming 'The Crow', or events that have entered folklore like the deaths associated with opening Tutankhamen's tomb may be suitable for investigation. Examine questions that employees might have asked to protect their health and safety before these incidents occurred.

### Dream job

Have students brainstorm and then research the workplace health and safety questions they would ask before they started their dream job.

## Sensitive issues

For some students (and some teachers) workplace health and safety can be a sensitive topic.

Anyone who has lost a friend, family member or colleague in a workplace incident, knows someone suffering from a workplace injury or illness, or has strong views on the subject may find that the topic raises difficult feelings or memories.

Protective measures that you may like to consider before discussing workplace health and safety in your classroom include:

- let students know about the discussion in advance
- set clear ground rules about discussion etiquette, especially respecting others
- allow students who feel uncomfortable to withdraw from the discussion
- describe and encourage appropriate levels of disclosure
- have students agree that the discussion stays in the classroom, it is not to be talked about or continued outside
- encourage students to talk to a school counsellor or trusted adult if they are distressed by the discussion.

## Additional resources

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

- Injury statistics for young people
- Occupational health and safety tip sheets
- New and young workers in the hospitality industry
- *Children and Young Workers Code of Practice 2006*.

Available at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or by calling the Workplace Health and Safety infoline 1300 737 341.

### Safework SA Youth@Work

Health and safety and industrial relations information for young workers, including a virtual supermarket, office and hotel, and hunt the hazards game.

[www.safework.sa.gov.au/youth/](http://www.safework.sa.gov.au/youth/)

### Dr Aargh's Workshop of Horrors

Dr Aargh's workshop is an A – Z of workplace injuries and illnesses, with youth-friendly explanations of an illness or injury and fairly confronting image for each letter of the alphabet.

[www.osh.dol.govt.nz/kidz/gore/index.shtml](http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/kidz/gore/index.shtml)

### WorkSafe WA Smart Move

WorkSafe SmartMove is designed for students in years 10 to 12 to raise workplace health and safety awareness. It provides information and tests about the potential dangers of the workplace but young workers rights and responsibilities.

[www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/smartmove/index.htm](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/smartmove/index.htm)