

Day of Mourning BC Schools Project



Young Workers' Safety Lesson

1. Present the following scenario to the students:

You work at *FastFry Burger*, a fast food restaurant in your neighbourhood. Your job is in the kitchen as a food prep and cook. Your duties include preparing burgers, fries, cooking patties on the grill, using the deep fryer and cleaning the kitchen area and equipment.

During a very busy shift your supervisor, Bill, tells you to get a new box of frozen burger patties from a shelf in the walk-in freezer. You go into the freezer and see that the boxes are on the top shelf of the eight-foot-tall shelving unit. The boxes are heavy and out of reach. You look for the 6-foot ladder the restaurant keeps for such work, but discover it's being used outside by a worker who is cleaning windows that have recently been "egged" by some local vandals.

You tell Bill, who looks harried and very busy, about the ladder situation and he says "Look, kid, I'm busy and Darren needs to use the ladder to get those windows clean. Find a big box or a stool from the customer seating area and stand on that instead. We need those burgers right away."

You remember seeing one of those boxes fall off the shelf and land with a heavy thud on the floor before and remember thinking how lucky it was no one was standing there when it fell. You don't feel safe using a wobbly stool or container to get the box. Bill is famous for his short temper when the restaurant is busy, and he doesn't want to wait for Darren to be done with the ladder.

You go back to the walk-in freezer and wonder what you should do. Another teenager at the restaurant was let go recently, and the rumour was that he just couldn't keep up with

the pace of work. You don't want to anger your supervisor or lose your job, but this task just doesn't seem safe

2. Questions to the class for discussion:

- *What should you do if you were in this situation?*
- *What could you say to the supervisor to assertively, but respectfully, express your concerns about safety?*
- *What are your rights if your supervisor disregards your concerns?*

3. Distribute Fact Sheet or Student Postcard. Discuss possible responses to the above scenario and discuss everyone's rights under the law.

Suggested responses to the supervisor and points of info:

- *"Bill, I'd like to get that box of burgers, but I'm worried that I may hurt myself. Stools and boxes are too wobbly to stand on and that burger box is heavy. Can I wait for the ladder, or maybe Darren could finish with the windows after I get the box down?"*
- *"Do you think it's safe to stand on a stool to get the box, Bill? I'm concerned about safely getting that box down."*
- If Bill the supervisor insists, you may need to be polite but assertive and say: *"I'm sorry Bill, I don't want to cause you problems, but I don't think it's safe to do that without a ladder. When a ladder is available, I'll be happy to get it down."*
Remember, you always have the right to refuse unsafe work.
- No job is more valuable than your safety. By law, an employer cannot fire or discipline you for refusing work over reasonable safety concerns.

4. Mathew Boycott Video:

Pose the following question to the class for pre-video discussion: *"Is a kitchen a very dangerous place to work? What dangers are there in a kitchen? Many teenagers work in restaurants and fast food. Do you think a lot of them get injured on the job?"*

Warn class of graphic content of video, which may disturb some viewers. Show Mathew Boycott video to class.

<https://bctf.ca/uploadedfiles/public/healthsafety/matthewbowcottstory.mp4>

Discuss with class using the following prompts –

- *Why do you think Mathew was injured on the job?*
- *How will this injury affect him for the rest of his life? Could it have been even worse?*
- *How did his employer not fully prepare Mathew for his job in the kitchen?*
- *Could this accident have been avoided? How?*
- *Did the video change your view of kitchen work? What other jobs do teenagers commonly do, and what are some of the dangers they may face at those jobs?*
- *April 28th is the National Day of Mourning for Workers Injured and Killed on the Job. Why do you think we are commemorating this day in the school?*

Emphasize the following points in your discussion –

- Mathew was not properly trained in his duties in the kitchen, including the safe operation and cleaning of a deep fryer. **All workers have a right to know workplace dangers, receive appropriate safety training and equipment from their employers. *If you don't get it, you should insist upon it.***
- Don't be afraid to ask questions of your employer if you are unsure about how to do something, or unsure of doing something safely on the job.
- Young workers often have less experience, are usually eager to do a good job, and often they don't want to cause trouble with their employers. As a consequence, they are more likely to be hurt on the job.
- Everyone has the right to refuse unsafe work.
- On average 1000 people die from work related injury in Canada each year.
- We commemorate the DOM in the school to remember those who have been killed on the job and to remind young people to exercise your rights as workers and keep safe in your present or future jobs.

5. Distribute “Getting a Job?” WorkSafe BC handout.

- Have students read handout: ["Getting a Job?"](#)

- Discuss following reading. Possible prompts: *“What are your basic rights in the workplace according to the handout? Why do you think they are important? Why do young workers sometimes not speak up in the workplace when they have safety concerns? How does safety “start on day 1”?*
- Optional: **Students take home to study for quiz next class.**