

Workplace Safety Group

March 2010

Monthly News e-Letter

Helping you meet the requirements of Ontario's **BILL 168**

Ontario employers should now be reviewing and/or revising their workplace policies and procedures dealing with workplace violence, workplace harassment, and domestic violence to ensure that they are compliant with their new legal obligations by June 15/10 when Bill 168 becomes law!

Workplace Safety Group's Workplace Violence Prevention workshop is highly valuable training that can help your company meet the requirements of Ontario's Bill 168.

The workshop offers positive solutions for employees to respond safely and consistently to challenging situations in the workplace.

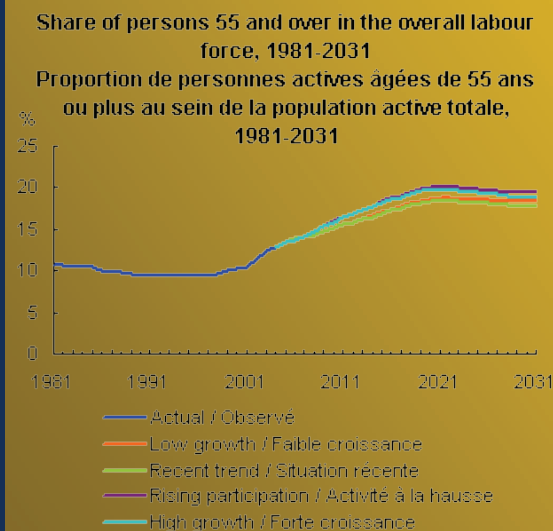


[WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION](#)

71 King Street, Suite 206
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3H7
905-688-9429
866-347-7707
www.workplacesafetygroup.com

THE AGING WORKER

There is no exact, commonly recognized age at which someone is considered an older worker. Some studies have focused on people over 55, while other studies included those 45 years or older. Baby Boomers, those born after WWII, are now aging. This means that a large part of the workforce is middle age or past middle age. This group raises the average working age and the number of older people working part-time. Studies are looking at how this affects the workforce and the effects different types of work have on older workers' bodies.



Studies show that older workers tend to have fewer accidents; however, when an older worker is injured, the injuries are often more severe and may take longer to recover. The types of injuries can be different; where younger workers tend to get more eye or hand injuries, older workers who have worked for many years report more back injuries.

Many workplace injuries are the result of doing the same things over and over, causing repetitive motion injuries which develop over time. An older worker therefore, may report more musculoskeletal injuries since they've had longer for the condition to develop.

When anyone, regardless of age, is pushed to work harder than they safely are able, there is risk for injury. Because older workers tend to have more severe injuries, it is important to make adjustments to work stations and/or work design to make them as safe as possible. It's also important to ensure a person is suited to perform a particular task safely.

Questions, Concerns, Comments?
Email [Carola Hicks](mailto:Carola.Hicks@workplacesafetygroup.com)
carola@workplacesafetygroup.com

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PROTECT YOURSELF

Stay alert to possible hazards. Take the extra time to use special personal protective equipment and follow safety procedures. Listen to suggestions that will protect you.

Safety Attitude include:

- **Focus on the task and concentrate on the job. If you have other things on your mind, are distracted or bored, an accident can happen easily.**
- **Have the strength of character to do the right thing, even when under pressure to take shortcuts; stick with the proper procedure**
- **Take the time to do the job correctly & use the correct personal protective equipment. Saving a few minutes isn't worth a lifelong injury.**
- **Care enough about yourself & your co-workers to take responsibility even when a task "isn't my job". You are part of a team.**
- **Weigh the risks of performing a job a certain way. A one-in-a-thousand risk is not worth the possible cost**

A good safety attitude means being smart and avoiding unnecessary risks. Making a good safety attitude a habit effects everyone around you.

Bodies change with age. Most of these changes are first noticed at ages 40 or 50, but changes can occur (or start) as early as 20 or 25. These changes include:

- **Maximum muscular strength and range of joint movement:** In general, people lose 15 to 20% of their strength from the ages of 20 to 60. With increased age, the body loses some range of motion and flexibility.
- **Posture and balance:** In general, older people may find it harder to maintain good posture and balance. When seated or standing still, this may not be a problem, but accidents that happen when someone loses their balance do happen more often as a person ages.
- **Sleep Regulation:** Older people can't regulate sleep as well as they used to. How long a person sleeps, and how well they sleep, can be disrupted by changing work. The impact is of special concern for older shift or night workers. They might need more recovery time between shifts or extended workdays.
- **Thermoregulation (Body Temperature):** Older bodies are less able to maintain internal temperatures or adjust to changes in external temperature. This change means that older workers may find heat or cold more difficult to deal with.
- **Vision: Vision changes with age.** Reading at certain distances and text size may become a challenge. Changes also occur in the peripheral visual field (seeing in the areas to the side of you), visual acuity (how sharp and "unfuzzy" things appear), depth perception (how far away things seem), and resistance to glare and light transmission. These changes are normally not noticed by a person unless there is poor lighting, poor contrast or there are sources of glare which affect the work.
- **Auditory (Hearing):** Most often, a change in hearing is noticed as the inability to listen to a particular voice or sound in a noisy environment. Higher frequencies (high pitch sounds) are more difficult to hear. This can make hearing verbal instructions difficult.

In general older workers exhibit lower turnover, more dedication to the workplace, and have more positive work values. Absenteeism is less frequent, but may be longer when it does happen. Some studies noted that older workers work slower and can't easily make quick decisions; however, this change is balanced because they also tend to be more accurate in their work, making more correct decisions than younger co-workers.

It should be noted that studies have *not shown any consistent relationship* between aging and work performance.

