

Factsheets & Resources

What kind of accidents do young people have?

Young people have all sorts of accidents in the workplace. Some are minor, like a paper cut to the finger which requires a sticking plaster; or a small bruise to the leg after a bump against a desk which requires a bit of tender loving care. But some accidents have left young people seriously and even fatally injured. Here is a list of some of the accidents that can have more serious consequences:

- Contact with moving machinery or material being machined. Many young people died after being pulled into moving machinery by their hair, hands or arms.
- Being struck by a moving object which includes objects flying at or falling on the young person.
- Being struck by a moving vehicle - and this could be something like a fork-lift truck on a factory floor.
- A strike against something fixed or stationary - for example, a young person may fall or be pushed against anything from a machine or stack of boxes to another person.
- An injury received while handling, lifting or carrying something which may be heavy or awkward - from a metal tool to a box of paper or even a child. In fact, many workplace injuries involve what we call manual handling. You should be given training on how to handle, lift and carry things safely if this is part of your work.
- A slip, trip or fall on the same level. For example: You can slip on a wet or highly polished floor; You can trip over a loose carpet tile or trailing cable; You can fall over an object and land on the floor.
- A fall from a height, say from a ladder, step or staircase or, in the construction industry, from scaffolding.
- Being trapped by something collapsing or overturning. This usually means that you are trapped under something with some weight.

- Drowning or being suffocated (asphyxiation) which means that something stops you breathing properly. The lack of oxygen in the blood stream causes unconsciousness and if the oxygen supply is not restored, will lead to death.
- Exposure to or contact with a harmful substance which may be anything from acid to molten metal or a poisonous gas.
- Exposure to fire as in the 1980's case of a 17 year old trainee paint manufacturer, who died when vapour from the chemical substance, acetone (a solvent of paints and varnishes - often used in nail polish remover), was ignited by sparks from an electrical junction box.
- Exposure to an explosion, say where two substances - which should be kept separate - are accidentally mixed together, react and explode, rather like a bomb going off.
- Contact with electricity or an electrical discharge. This could happen in any work environment, including a quiet office, unless steps are taken to maintain electrical equipment in a safe working order.