

## ***“Pumpkins” stay safe with training program***

Young workers enter new and unfamiliar ground when they step into Ainsworth Lumber’s 100 Mile House location. In the mill’s highly mechanized environment, young workers learn that when it comes to safety, you can’t lumber around.

According to Safety and Environmental Manager Don Martin, the company places particular emphasis in training young workers because of their inexperience and enthusiasm.

“They are the most vulnerable,” says Martin. “They are eager to please and want to impress. For the most part, trying to accomplish this means taking unnecessary chances.”

To create over 425 million square feet of oriented strand boards each year, a wide variety of heavy and potentially dangerous machinery is used. For young workers, learning how to safely work – in an environment full of forklifts, conveyor belts, and thermal presses – is key.

At the beginning of their orientation, young workers receive a general introduction to the mill and learn about the health and safety staff – such as first aid attendants or members of the OHS committee – through a binder that identifies each individual with their name and photo.

To familiarize young workers to an industrial environment, a variety of safety videos are shown. The videos also introduce them to the hazards found at the mill and the different terms and scenarios that they may encounter while at work.

After taking a guided tour of the mill, young workers focus on their correct work practices, or CWPs, and learn how to prevent job-specific incidents and injuries.

Young workers then temporarily progress onto the workplace itself and spend the better part of the day shadowing a senior employee. Now with a better understanding of their role and environment, young workers leave the factory floor to review their CWPs. The time away from the busy environment allows young workers to distill everything they've learned – without the distractions found on the factory floor.

For the next six months, young workers at the mill wear bright orange coveralls for easy identification. Affectionately dubbed “pumpkins” by the staff, young workers are also paired with a mentor who, along with a team leader, will monitor habits, document progress, and provide guidance.

“They need to be reassured that if they do not know something, this is okay. We will teach them,” says Martin. “We were all young once, and did not know everything when we entered into the workforce.”

Young workers at the mill learn that they are not required to know everything about their workplace, but are expected to be proactive when it comes to safety and production.

“We want them to think about their own safety as well as their co-workers' safety,” says Martin. “On a daily basis, we encourage them to ask lots of questions. Time is not of the essence. Doing the job safely is the main goal.”