



Imperial Paving

Young worker safety is a two-way street

For Imperial Paving, safety is not a bump in the road. Working outdoors and in high-traffic areas, the Lower Mainland company's mobile crews face unique challenges every day.

"The equipment is unforgiving," says Safety Officer Bill Denault. "The conditions are very difficult to work in. The people that work in this industry have to be well trained and well monitored."

Road building—with its proximity to daily traffic and mobile heavy machinery—is especially dangerous for young workers who lack the proper training and supervision.

"Young workers must know that the company does not expect them to take any unnecessary risks," says Denault.

To help young workers avoid dangerous situations, Imperial Paving relies on three key elements: introduction, reinforcement, and evaluation of safety knowledge.

Before even stepping onto the jobsite, young workers have already completed the general orientation which covers company-wide procedures – like who to contact if an incident happens.

Young workers also complete a site orientation that addresses the unique hazards found at that particular workplace. During the orientation, young workers sign their initials on each item of a checklist. By initialing, they confirm that site hazards and their controls are understood.

In the next step of their training, young workers are partnered with an on-site mentor. Not only do mentors reinforce how to identify and control hazards, but also gauge how comfortable and confident their young worker is learning and adapting.

Young workers also receive an orientation sticker on their hard hat. In addition to identifying the person as a young worker, the sticker reminds co-workers that the individual is new and needs guidance.

Initially, young workers must demonstrate that they have safely mastered the basics. For example, in addition to describing how to rake asphalt, young workers must demonstrate proper technique. This includes making sure that the rake's handle doesn't extend into the path of nearby traffic. After passing the evaluation, young workers are rewarded with greater responsibility and tasks with more complexity.

By introducing, reaffirming and evaluating the knowledge of young workers, Imperial Paving makes safety a priority and part of its culture. In addition to its orientation and mentorship programs, the company also organizes regular tailgate meetings, weekly site inspections, and annual safety meetings.

Imperial Paving understands that young workers are enthusiastic about their job and proper training affects others as well.

“Our young worker program also infects the older, more experienced workforce with an improved safety culture,” says Denault. “Monitoring of our young workers has caused our experienced workers to review their existing work habits and safety philosophy.”

For Imperial Paving, focusing on young workers also means keeping everyone else safe.