

Playland at the PNE

Young worker safety is along for the ride

Entertaining over 300,000 youth and families each year, Playland places safety as a top priority for all guests and employees. Young workers make up the majority of the amusement park's workforce and those who operate the rides have arguably the greatest responsibility.

Ride operators receive comprehensive training to ensure that they and their guests remain safe around Playland's massive high-speed machinery. For many individuals, becoming a ride operator will be their first job.

"We encourage enthusiasm and view inexperience as an opportunity to teach new skills to individuals who are eager to learn," says Barbara Cook, Playland's Health and Safety Manager.

After learning about Playland's general policies and procedures, young workers receive a specific orientation for a ride. Using a booklet, a trainer Foreperson will cover ride-specific safety topics such as the attraction's maximum capacity and its height restriction.

Young workers then do a walkthrough of the ride. The trainer Foreperson will go over what they have already learned, point out the different elements and how the safety procedures all fit together. For example, young workers are taught the location and importance of the "yellow spot" – the safe area where they should stand while the ride is in motion.

For the first couple of shifts, young workers are shadowed by a senior ride operator who will observe and assess how they're doing. Young workers are evaluated on how they assist guests in and out of the ride, as well as how they safely operate the machinery.

The senior ride operator will also determine the level of comfort of each young worker by asking questions and looking for feedback.

"By encouraging questions and active participation in health and safety activities, we promote a working environment that challenges young workers to identify hazardous situations and think critically to solve problems," says Cook.

To reinforce safety topics early on, young workers also receive follow-up training after about a week on the job.

Later on in their Playland careers, they have the opportunity to progress onto more complex rides such as the famous Wooden Rollercoaster. Of course, more training comes with each new ride they operate.

Playland's young workers learn early on that workplace safety is a priority; active participation in health and safety issues is also part of the job. Even if they don't remain at Playland, young workers will take these lessons with them as they progress onto different careers.

"Encourage young workers to ask questions and give suggestions," says Cook.

"Instill a 'culture of safety' that employees can take with them into the future."