

## Rapid Fire

with **Geraldine Gracia**

5 questions you have always wanted a professional chef to answer

This week featuring celebrity chef **Roger Mooking**

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Occupational Health and Safety in the Hotel Industry

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 Author **LISA CARD**



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### Occupational Health and Safety in the Hotel Industry

*Lax health and safety practices and policies end up costing the employer and employee alike.*

The hotel industry faces several unique health and safety challenges. Educating a workforce largely comprised of young employees on the dangers in their work environment can be a challenge. The hospitality industry has employed an average of 73,000 young workers each year over the past five years. According to Statistics Canada, 17 percent of all injury claims made in the hospitality industry are made by young workers. Both employers and employees are presented with the important task of laying a foundation of safety in the workplace.

Vince Garnier is the Provincial Director of OHS Investigations, Technical and Internal Services. Garnier and his team are responsible for inspecting workplaces in Nova Scotia to ensure they are compliant with health and safety legislation. When asked why youth seem to comprise such a large percentage of the hospitality injury claims, Garnier responded that "A lack of knowledge relative to their OHS rights and responsibilities seems to be prevalent in young workers. Further, young workers tend to be intimidated and hesitant to report hazards and injuries." Garnier points out that many young workers are new to the workplace and are still becoming familiar with their surroundings when accidents occur. Many young workers are injured within a few days of hire.

The types of injuries that are prevalent in the hospitality sector include slips, trips, and falls. Garnier advises that "Proper footwear, an awareness of safe work procedures (particularly for kitchen workers and cleaning staff), and first aid/WHMIS training is essential." Garnier warns that workers should also be on guard against ergonomic hazards that can result in repetitive strain injuries. These types of injuries can be long lasting and often debilitating for young workers.

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So what can hotel owners and managers do to specifically protect this segment of their work force?

Garnier believes that exercising due diligence is the key. "Know your duties and responsibilities and fulfill them. Ensure effective supervision [and] don't put young employees to work until they are properly trained." The consequences for employers who fail to provide a safe working environment for their employees can include an order issued by the responding OHS officer to bring the workplace in compliance. Garnier indicates that the OHS officer also has the authority to lay charges, which would be dealt with in court "For each conviction, the maximum fine is \$250,000 plus up to 2 years imprisonment. For a violation that resulted in a fatality, the fine increases to \$500,000 per conviction."

Protecting worker safety should be a primary focus for everyone concerned. Lax health and safety practices and policies end up costing the employer and employee alike. The financial repercussions of poor health and safety practices can add up when you consider lost time due to injury or OHS fines. The risks to the employee are much greater. Workplace injuries can continue to affect a young worker for the remainder of their working life. More information on employer and employee health and safety responsibilities can be found at <http://www.ccohs.ca/>.

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