



12 December, 2007

YOUNG WORKERS TOLD 'SPEAK UP AND STAY SAFE' AS INJURIES AND DEATHS INCREASE

Students taking on seasonal jobs in time for Christmas have been warned to speak out against safety shy bosses, following a 50 per cent increase in young worker deaths over the past year.

Denise Kitchener, chief executive of national campaigning organisation APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is urging students to 'speak up and stay safe,' so that deaths and injuries can be avoided.

"More than 17,000 young workers were injured over the past year – that's one young worker injured every half an hour," she said. "Something is very wrong when, in this day and age, people are still being needlessly injured and killed while at work.

"The highest rate of all workplace injuries occurs in the 16-24 age group, so we are particularly concerned about the one million students who take on part time jobs to fund their studies. With Christmas around the corner, this number is likely to rise and it is imperative that youngsters speak out if they are concerned about a safety issue at work," she said.

APIL is calling on all employers to push health and safety to the top of their agendas, and make sure part time and temporary workers are trained and supervised in the same way a permanent member of staff would be.

“Many people are afraid to speak out even if they feel their safety is at risk,” said Denise. “They may worry about losing their jobs or getting into trouble with the boss, but they have a right to go to work and be safe. The figures suggest that many employers are turning a blind eye to safety, so it is imperative that people stand their ground if all is not well.”

Solicitor and APIL member David Urpeth has seen first hand the devastating consequences poor safety can have upon someone’s life, after he dealt with a case in which a young worker lost three fingers.

“This young man was working for a packaging company and was asked to cut some cardboard sheets,” explained David. “He was shown only once how to use the machine, and then left to his own devices. He had been told that every piece of cardboard wasted was money to the business, so was trying to cut them as small as possible. His hand was drawn into the machine and his fingers were severed beyond repair.”

APIL says all young workers should be vigilant, and should not be afraid to question any task they are asked to perform if they feel their safety is at risk.

“People have a right to go to work and come home again unharmed,” said Denise Kitchener. “We want to see all employers looking after their staff, whether they are permanent workers, part time or temporary.”

-ends-

Notes to editors:

- APIL was set up in 1990 by a group of lawyers who wanted to provide a voice for injured people, and is now recognised by Government and other organisations. APIL's SafetyWatch campaign aims to highlight potential hazards to people in order to prevent injury. Visit www.apil.com

¹ Statistics are taken from the Health and Safety Executive's Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations statistics on workplace injuries.

- David Urpeth is a partner at Irwin Mitchell solicitors (t:0114 274 4327)

For more information, contact Lisa Wardle, t: 0115 9388715, or Andrew Brentnall, t: 0115 9388702