

altered lives project

Steve's story

Steve's life was forever altered in a workplace accident on Tuesday, August 21, 2007. It's a day he will never forget.

At the age of 22, Steve worked in a food processing facility where he had been employed for a year. While operating an electric walk-behind fork truck – a piece of equipment he had never operated before – Steve's left foot was severely crushed.

Without the proper training to operate the fork truck, Steve mixed up the forward and reverse speeds and backed himself against a wall, and it crushed his foot in the process.

He says, "my memory of it is vague, it happened so fast. I hit the ground screaming. It was the worst pain I could imagine. The next thing I knew I was being carried off." Steve was taken to the hospital to be treated immediately.

After five months of recovery following the injury, Steve returned to work on modified duty. Last year, he required another surgery and was off work for almost a year. He returned to his job in February 2016. To date, Steve has been accommodated by his employer but he fears for the sustainability of his accommodation. He always worries about the future and takes things one day at a time.

Today, Steve is reminded of his injury every day by the way he walks – he cannot walk flat-footed any more – and by the faces of his family and friends who look at him in disbelief. "I have good days and bad ones. My family has been very supportive but it's hard for them to see me like this. That such a severe injury could happen to such a young person."

Between 2009 and 2013, the WSIB reports that 30 young workers aged 15 – 24 died in work-related incidents. During that same period, more than 30,000 young workers suffered injuries resulting in lost time at work.



The majority of lost-time claims approved by the WSIB involved young workers being struck by objects and equipment.

As a result of his injury, Steve lost his ability to pursue his favourite pastime of snowboarding.

One positive thing that came from the experience, he says is that "you know who your true friends are. They are the ones who accommodate my speed and consider my disability when they plan events."

If he could go back in time and give his younger self some advice, he would say: "Be safe. Ask for training. And tell someone if you feel unsafe."