

Facts for Employers



Safer Jobs for Teens

NATIONAL EDITION

“Most teens are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They make my work a lot of fun. But teens can be injured on the job when they don't receive adequate safety training and supervision.”

—Scott Silver
Operations Manager, Oakland Zoo

“Having young people at work gives us a chance to remind everybody that safety is important. We have really focused on our safety program. We haven't had any serious injuries this year, and we're saving over 25% in workers' comp costs!”

—Michele Clark-Clough
The Youth Employment Partnership

Labor Occupational Health Program
University of California, Berkeley

Six Steps to Safer Teen Jobs

Each year 50 teens under 18 die from work injuries in the U.S. About 53,000 are injured seriously enough to require emergency room treatment. Keep safety in mind! There's a lot that employers can do to prevent injuries to their teen workers. **The measures you take to keep teens safe will help protect all employees.** Begin by following these steps:

1. Know the Law

- Understand OSHA's workplace safety and health regulations. These are designed to protect all employees, including teens, from injury. Check to see if your state has its own OSHA program. State programs must be at least as effective as federal OSHA. For more information go to www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp.
- Understand the child labor laws in your state. These prohibit teens from working late and/or long hours, and doing especially dangerous work. These laws are enforced by the U.S. Dept. of Labor Wage & Hour Division and/or by your state labor department.

2. Check Your Compliance

- Make sure teen employees are not assigned work schedules that violate the law, or given prohibited job tasks like operating heavy equipment or using power tools. See later sections for more information.

3. Make Sure Teens Have Work Permits

- In many states, workers under 18 must apply for work permits at their school or school district office before beginning a new job. Check your state laws.

4. Stress Safety to Supervisors

- Make sure frontline supervisors who give teens their job assignments know the law. Encourage supervisors to set a good example. They are in the best position to influence teens' attitudes and work habits.

5. Set Up a Safety and Health Program

- OSHA recommends that every workplace have a Safety and Health Management System.
- Make sure all jobs and work areas are free of hazards. The law requires you to provide a safe and healthy workplace.
- Find out if there are simple low-cost safety measures that can prevent injuries.

6. Train Teens To Put Safety First

- Give teens clear instructions for each task, especially unfamiliar ones. Provide **hands-on** training on the correct use of equipment. Show them what safety precautions to take. Point out possible hazards. Give them a chance to ask questions.
- Observe teens while they work and correct any mistakes. Retrain them regularly.
- Encourage teens to let you know if there's a problem or directions are unclear. Make sure teens feel free to speak up.
- Prepare teens for emergencies—accidents, fires, violent situations, etc. Show them escape routes and explain where to go if they need emergency medical treatment.
- Supply personal protective equipment when needed—goggles, safety shoes, masks, hard hats, gloves, etc. Be sure that teens know how to use it.

What Work Does the Law Prohibit Teens From Doing?

The lists below give the major national restrictions. There are other restrictions depending on the industry and the worker's age. Also, there are limited exemptions for youth under 18 who are in apprenticeship and student-learner programs. Your state child labor laws may have more restrictions. To find out more about your state laws, go to www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm. For general information on child labor laws go to www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/cl/screen2.asp.

Workers under 18 MAY NOT:

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as a main part of the job, or work as an outside helper on a motor vehicle
- Operate power-driven machinery:
 - meat slicers
 - bakery machines (including dough mixers)
 - box crushers/compactors
 - woodworking machines
 - metalworking machines
 - punches
 - hoists
 - forklifts
 - circular saws
 - band saws
 - guillotine shears
- Work where there is exposure to radiation
- Work in:
 - wrecking or demolition
 - excavation
 - logging or sawmills
 - roofing, or work that involves going on or near the roof
 - manufacturing brick or tile
 - manufacturing or storage of explosives
 - mining
 - meat packing or processing

Also, workers under 16 MAY NOT:

- Work in building or construction
- Work in manufacturing or food processing
- Do any baking activities
- Cook (*except* with electric or gas grills that do not involve cooking over an open flame and with deep fat fryers that automatically lower and raise the baskets).
- Do dry cleaning or work in a commercial laundry
- Work on a ladder or scaffold
- Work in a freezer or meat cooler
- Load or unload trucks, railroad cars, or conveyors
- Work in a warehouse (except as a clerical)
- Use power-driven lawn mowers



What Hours May Teens Work?

Federal child labor laws protect younger teens from working too long, too late, or too early. Some states have additional laws on the hours older teens may work.

This table shows the hours 14- and 15-year-olds may work under federal law.



Work Hours for Teens		
	Ages 14 and 15	Ages 16 and 17
Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 am–7 pm, from Labor Day–June 1 Not during school hours 7 am–9 pm, from June 1–Labor Day 	Check your state child labor laws at: www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm .
Maximum Hours When School Is in Session	18 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 hours a day on school days 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays 	
Maximum Hours When School Is not in Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 hours a week 8 hours a day 	

Ideas From Employers

- A California zoo assigns each new teen worker a “buddy” or mentor. Sometimes this is a more experienced teen worker. This mentor answers questions, helps give hands-on training, and offers safety tips.
- A retail clothing chain with many young employees uses role playing regularly at monthly safety meetings. Workers enact specific health and safety problems that have come up, and develop solutions.
- At one chain of convenience stores, young employees are issued different colored smocks, based on age. This lets the supervisors know at a glance who is not allowed to operate the electric meat slicer.
- An employer in the fast-food industry, with 8,000 young workers in five states, developed a computerized tracking system to ensure that teens aren't scheduled for too many hours during school weeks.
- One major grocery store chain includes teen workers on the safety committee, which conducts safety inspections, reviews employee injuries, and make suggestions for prevention.

Compliance Checklist for Employers

This checklist can help you determine whether you are in compliance with the most important child labor laws and OSHA regulations. The list is not complete, and is not intended as legal advice. Other sections of this factsheet give more information on the issues covered here.

Labor Laws

- Young employees *do not* work too many hours, too late, or too early (as defined by federal and state laws).
- Employees under 18 *do not* do any hazardous work prohibited by child labor laws.
- Employees under 16 *do not* do any of the tasks prohibited for their age group.
- If required by your state, all employees under 18 have valid work permits.
- All employees (including teens) are covered by workers' compensation.
- Employees (including teens) receive at least the minimum wage after their first three months on the job. Many states have a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum. Lower wages may be allowed when workers receive tips. For minimum wage information nationwide go to: www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm.



OSHA Regulations

- You provide health and safety training required by specific OSHA standards and/or by your state OSHA program. (See *Training Requirements in OSHA Standards and Training Guidelines* at www.osha.gov/Publications/2254.html).
- You meet the key requirements of the OSHA Hazard Communication standard:
 - All containers of toxic materials are labeled with the chemical name, hazard warnings, and name and address of the manufacturer.
 - Employees are trained about chemicals they work with, potential hazards, and protective measures.
 - Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for all chemicals in your worksite are easily accessible to workers.
- You meet the key requirements of the OSHA Emergency Action Plan standard, such as clearly defining evacuation procedures, and assigning emergency response duties to specific personnel.
- You provide all safety and protective equipment that employees need.

NOTE: OSHA also has many specific regulations covering electrical hazards, fire safety, fall protection, machinery, etc. See **Resources for Information and Help** in this factsheet.

Resources for Information and Help

About health and safety:

- **OSHA On-Site Consultation Service.** Provides free, confidential advice and assistance to employers.
www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult.html
- **OSHA website.** Has publications and searchable OSHA standards. Includes some material specifically designed for small business and material dealing with young workers.
www.osha.gov
- **Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP),** U.C. Berkeley. Click on "National Young Worker Safety Resource Center."
☎ (510) 642-5507
www.youngworkers.org
- **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).** Has an online safety and health guide for small business owners, employers, and managers.
www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-100/default.html

About wages or child labor laws:

- **Your state labor department.** Enforces state labor laws.
www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm
- **Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Dept. of Labor.** Enforces federal labor laws.
☎ (866) 4-USWAGE (487-9243)
www.dol.gov and www.youthrules.dol.gov

About workers' compensation:

- **Employment Standards Administration,** U.S. Dept. of Labor. To find contact information for your state's workers' compensation program go to:
www.dol.gov/esa/owcp/dfec/regs/compliance/wc.htm

How Can I Hire Teens From a Training Program?

- **Work Experience Education, School-to-Career, or Academy Programs.** Call your high school or school district office. Ask for the Work Experience Educator or school-to-career coordinator.
- **Regional Occupational Programs or Centers (ROP/C).** Call your high school or school district office and ask about trade-specific programs in your area.
- **Apprenticeship Programs.** To find programs in your area, visit the Registered Apprenticeship website of the federal Employment and Training Administration at oa.foleta.gov and click on "Program Sponsors Database" near the bottom.
- **Local job training and placement programs.** Call your local Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Ask about community training programs.