



How to keep teenagers safe at work

Millions of teens work. These jobs provide benefits to both employers and teens. Employers get fresh ideas and hard workers, teens gain valuable experiences. Because these teens will someday be the adult workforce, it is important that they start out on the right foot and are kept safe at work.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) prohibits teens from performing tasks determined to be too hazardous. A list of 17 hazardous non-farm jobs considered off limits for teens under the age of 18 includes:

1. Manufacturing or storing explosives.
2. Any driving by 16-year-olds; limited driving for 17-year-olds.
3. Coal mining.
4. Logging and saw milling.
5. Power-driven wood-working machines.
6. Exposure to radioactive substances and to ionizing radiation.
7. Power-driven hoisting equipment.
8. Power-driven metal-forming, punching and shearing machines.
9. Mining, other than coal mining.
10. Meat packing or processing (including power-driven meat slicing machines).
11. Power-driven bakery machines, including mixers.
12. Power-driven paper-products machines.
13. Manufacturing brick, tile and related products.
14. Power-driven circular saw, band saws and guillotine shears.
15. Wrecking, demolition and ship-breaking operations.
16. Roofing operations.
17. Excavation operations.

There are limited exemptions from this list for apprentices and student-learners under specified standards.

Instruct teens about safety

Stressing safety is vitally important to help eliminate injuries to teens. Their inexperience counts against them. Employees—including teens—with less than one year of experience account for almost one-third of the occupational injuries each year.

To help prepare teens to work safely, follow these simple steps:



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1. **Double check tasks.** Most tasks that teens are going to be asked to do are new experiences for them. Taking the time to show them how to properly perform a task and then watching them complete the task can help over-come their inexperience. Also, allowing teens the opportunity to ask questions freely will clear up any questions they may have. Check in with teens later to make sure they are performing the task properly and following all necessary safety precautions.
2. **Show teens how to use safety equipment.** Although the FLSA does prohibit teens from performing particularly hazardous jobs, this does not eliminate all hazards. Be sure teens understand when and how to use proper safety equipment. They also need to know about safety rules concerning buildings and equipment, such as not blocking doors or removing safety guards.
3. **Prepare teens for emergencies.** Every worker in a place of business needs to be ready in the event of an emergency. Teens are no exception. They should be trained along with your regular workers on how to respond to fire, weather or other potential emergencies. They also need to know who to contact if an injury should occur, if they need first aid or if they need medical care.
4. **If a safety and health program is not in place, set one up.** This is your best defense against workplace injuries and illnesses. Work with supervisors and experienced workers to develop an injury and illness prevention program to help identify and solve safety issues. Make sure teens are included in this program and in the safety training that goes along with it.

Other teen employment issues

In addition to following strict safety guidelines with teens, it is also important to make sure their rights are not violated and that they are not working more hours than they are allowed. For this, you need to check your local, state and federal labor laws. Generally speaking, youths 18 years or older may perform any job, whether hazardous or not, for unlimited hours in accordance with minimum wage and overtime requirements. Youths 16 to 17 may perform any non-hazardous job for unlimited hours. Youths 14 to 15 may work outside school hours in various non-manufacturing, non-mining and non-hazardous jobs up to three hours on a school day, 18 hours in a school week, eight hours on a non-school day and 40 hours on a non-school week.

For more information on teens in the workplace, the following resources are available:

- OSHA Web site:
www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/summer/sw-sk.htm
- FLSA Child Labor Rules Advisor:
www.elaws.dol.gov/flsa/cl/default.htm