

# ***Keeping Teens Safe on Summer Jobs***

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates annually as many as a third of all occupational injuries happen to people with less than one year experience. Of these, more than 200,000 are teens who are injured in job-related accidents. Many of these accidents are fatal.



Although federal job safety laws and child safety laws cover young workers, enforcement of the laws provide only limited help," says Dr. Jacquelyn P. Robinson, a workforce development specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. "Teens need help and appropriate training to work safely, especially when they begin a new job. Employers who hire teens have the responsibility for adequately training them."

Adequately trained teens and all workers who perform tasks correctly and safely have several advantages:

1. The reject or error rate for production or jobs performed is lower;
2. The employed youth have fewer accidents, costing employers less in lost workdays, lost production and compensation costs; and
3. Supervisors and coworkers, as well as the teens, are less frustrated.

Employers hiring teens can minimize the risk of teens getting hurt while on the job by:

## **1. Taking the time to adequately train the teen to perform the designated job or tasks.**

Give clear, step-by-step instructions. It may even be necessary to walk the teen through each step. Demonstrate appropriate safety precautions to take and how to use any protective clothing or safety gear. Make sure safety equipment is readily available. Be sure teens understand emergency procedures for all situations they may encounter. Observe the teens carefully as they demonstrate the job or task. Correct any mistakes immediately and allow for questions or feedback.

## **2. Following the Fair Labor Standards Act regulations on the types of jobs and the number of hours minors can work.**

Schedule youth to work only during the hours and for the number of hours approved by law. State, county or local governments may impose additional requirements on teen labor. For example, a city may have a curfew for teens under a certain age.

3. Enforcing a strong safety and health program. Practice safety and emergency procedures regularly.

To educate the public about safety for teen workers, the Department of Labor has a series of publications addressing the issue of teen employment. These guides help both employers and parents better understand child labor laws. They also give advice for preparing teens with no prior work experience.

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