

Are You a Working Teen?



Download the "Are you a working teen" App

Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

Every year nearly 30 teens under 18 die from work injuries in the United States. Another 27,000 get hurt badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

- 18-year-old Anna caught her hand in an electric cabbage shredder at a fast food restaurant. Her hand is damaged for life and she'll never have full use of it again.
- 17-year-old Joe lost his life while working as a construction helper. An electric shock killed him when he climbed a metal ladder to hand an electric drill to another worker.
- 16-year-old Donna was attacked and robbed at gunpoint at a sandwich shop. She was working alone after 11 p.m.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe equipment, stress, and the rushed pace of work. Also they may not receive adequate safety training and supervision.

Teens are much more likely to be injured when they work on jobs they are not allowed to do by law.

What Hazards Should I Watch Out for?

Type of Work	Examples of Hazards
Janitor/ Clean-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toxic chemicals in cleaning products• Blood or thrown out needles
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slippery floors• Hot cooking equipment• Sharp objects
Retail/ Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violent crimes• Heavy lifting
Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Harassment• Poor computer work station design

PROTECT YOUR HEALTH! KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

What Are My Rights on the Job?

By law, your employer must provide:

- A safe and healthful workplace.
- Training on chemicals and other health and safety hazards.
- Clothing and equipment that protects the worker.
- **At least the California minimum wage—as of January 1, 2024, set at \$16.00/hour.** To check for updated rates after 2023, visit https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_minimumwage.htm. In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage

during your first 160 hours of work if you have not worked before in a similar type of job.

- 1/2 hour meal break after no more than 5 hours; 10 minute rest period after each 4 hours.
- Workers' compensation benefits if you are hurt on the job. These include:
 - Medical care for your injury, whether or not you miss time from work.
 - Payments if you lose wages for more than 3 days.
 - Other benefits if you become permanently disabled.

You also have a right to:

- Report safety problems to Cal/OSHA.
- Work without racial or sexual harassment.
- Refuse to work if you could be killed or badly hurt by doing the task.
- Join or form a union.

What Should I do to Protect Myself on the Job?

To work safely you should:

- Follow all safety rules and instructions; use safety equipment and clothing that protects you, when it's needed
- Watch out for problems that might hurt other workers
- Keep work areas clean and neat
- Know what to do in an emergency
- Report any health and safety hazard to your supervisor
- Ask questions if you don't understand something

Do I Need a Work Permit?

YES. If you are under 18 and plan to work, you must get a work permit from your school or school district office (unless you have graduated).



Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?

NO. There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.

In California no worker under 18 may:

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as a main part of the job (17-year-olds may drive in a few specific cases.)
- Drive a forklift or other heavy equipment
- Use powered equipment like a circular saw, box crusher, meat slicer, or bakery machine
- Work in wrecking, demolition, excavation, or roofing
- Work in logging or a sawmill
- Prepare, serve, or sell alcoholic drinks
- Work where the teen is exposed to radiation

Also, no one 14 or 15 years old may:

- Do any baking
- 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)
- Work in dry cleaning or a commercial laundry
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or moving belt.
- Work on a ladder or scaffold

Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

YES. There are other rules about the type of work you can and cannot do. You must be at least 14 years old for most jobs except for informal jobs like babysitting or yard work. Check with your state labor department, school counselor, or job placement coordinator to make sure the job you are doing is allowed.



Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?

Child labor laws protect teens from working too long, too late, or too early.

This table shows the hours teens may work. (Some school districts may have more strict rules. Also, there are some exceptions for teens in work experience education programs.)

WORK HOURS FOR TEENS		
	Ages 14-15:	Ages 16-17:
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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 am–10 pm when there is school the next day • 5 am–12:30 am when there is no school the next day
The most hours you can work 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 	48 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours a day Monday–Thursday • 8 hours a day Friday–Sunday and holidays
The most hours you can work when school is not in session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 hours a week • 8 hours a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 hours a week • 8 hours a day

What If I Get Hurt on the Job?

- Tell your supervisor right away. If you're under 18, tell your parents or guardians too.
- Get emergency medical treatment if you need it.
- Your employer must give you a claim form. Fill it out and return it to your employer. This helps ensure that you receive workers' compensation benefits.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Did You Know?

You can receive benefits:

- Even if you are under 18.
- Even if you are a temporary or part-time worker (in most cases).
- You receive benefits no matter who was at fault for your job injury.
- You don't have to be a legal resident of the U.S. to receive workers' compensation benefits.
- You can't sue your employer for a job injury (in most cases).

What If I Have a Safety Problem?

Talk to your supervisor, parents, teachers, job training counselor, or union (if any) about the problem. If you need help, contact one of these agencies.

For health and safety information and advice:

- California Partnership for Young Worker Health and Safety.
Materials available in English and Spanish.
www.youngworkers.org
- UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program
(510) 642-5507
www.lohp.org
- UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program
(310) 794-5964
<http://losh.ucla.edu/yw/>

To make a health or safety complaint:

- Cal/OSHA
(800) 963-9424
www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH
- OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health)
(800) 321-OSHA
www.osha.gov

To make a complaint about wages or work hours:

- Labor Commissioner's Office
(415) 703-5300
www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE
- US Department of Labor
(866) 487-9243
www.dol.gov/whd/

To make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination:

- California Fair Employment and Housing
(800) 884-1684
www.dfeh.ca.gov
- US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
(800) 669-4000
www.eeoc.gov/youth/

For information about benefits for injured workers:

- California Workers' Compensation – Information and Assistance
(800) 736-7401
www.dir.ca.gov/DWC



LOHP
LABOR OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH PROGRAM

youngworkers.org

You have a right to speak up!

It is against the law for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem or injury, or for claiming workers' compensation.

The information in this factsheet reflects your state and/or federal labor laws, whichever are more protective. The more protective laws usually apply. Check with the state agencies listed above.