

# Are You a Working Teen?

## Protect Your Health! Know Your Rights!



### Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

■ 18-year-old Sylvia caught her hand in an electric cabbage shredder at a fast food restaurant. Her hand is permanently disfigured 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 assaulted and robbed at gunpoint at a sandwich shop. She was working alone after 11 p.m.

Every year nearly **70 teens under 18 die** from work injuries in the United States. Another **84,000 get hurt** badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe equipment, stressful conditions, and speed-up. 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"><li>• Toxic chemicals in cleaning products</li><li>• Blood on discarded needles</li></ul>
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slippery floors</li><li>• Hot cooking equipment</li><li>• Sharp objects</li></ul>
Retail/Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Violent crimes</li><li>• Heavy lifting</li></ul>
Office/Clerical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stress</li><li>• Harassment</li><li>• Poor computer work station design</li></ul>

## 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.
- Protective clothing and equipment.
- At least the California minimum wage, \$8.00 an hour. (City minimum wages may be higher.) In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first 160 hours of work, if you have no previous similar experience. For more information, ☎ (888) ASK-WAGE (275-9243).
- 1/2 hour meal period 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 the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
- Join or organize a union.

## 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 very limited circumstances)
- 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 beverages
- Work where there is exposure to radiation

**Also, no one 14 or 15 years old may:**

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



## Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

**YES!** There are other restrictions on the type of work you can and cannot do. **Age 14** is the minimum for most employment, 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.

## 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).



## What Are My Safety Responsibilities on the Job?

To work safely you should:

- Follow all safety rules and instructions; use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed
- Look out for co-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

## 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 restrictive regulations. Also, there are some exceptions for teens in work experience education programs.)

Work Hours for Teens		
	Ages 14 and 15	Ages 16 and 17
<b>Work Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 am–7 pm, from Labor Day–June 1</li><li>• Not during school hours</li><li>• 7 am–9 pm, from June 1–Labor Day</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 am–10 pm when there is school the next day</li><li>• 5 am–12:30 am when there is no school the next day</li></ul>
<b>Maximum Hours When School Is in Session</b>	<p>18 hours a week, but not over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 hours a day on school days</li><li>• 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays</li></ul>	<p>48 hours a week, but not over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 hours a day Monday–Thursday</li><li>• 8 hours a day Friday–Sunday and holidays</li></ul>
<b>Maximum Hours When School Is <i>not</i> in Session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 40 hours a week</li><li>• 8 hours a day</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 48 hours a week</li><li>• 8 hours a day</li></ul>



## 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 needed.
- 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).

### *You have a right to speak up!*

It is illegal 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 your state agencies listed at the right.*

## What If I Have a Safety Problem?

- Talk to your supervisor, parents, teachers, job training representative, or union representative (if any) about the problem.
- For health and safety information and advice, call the National Young Worker Safety Resource Center. Many materials are available in Spanish.  
☎ (510) 643-2424 [www.youngworkers.org](http://www.youngworkers.org)
- If necessary contact one of these agencies.

### To make a health or safety complaint:

- **OSHA** (Occupational Safety and Health)  
☎ (800) 321-OSHA (6742)  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)
- **Cal/OSHA**  
☎ (800) 963-9424  
[www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH](http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH)

### To make a complaint about wages or work hours:

- **California Labor Standards Enforcement**  
☎ (415) 703-5300 [www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE](http://www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE)
- **US. Department of Labor**  
☎ (866) 487-9243  
[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)

### To make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination:

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

### For information about benefits for injured workers:

- **California Workers' Compensation—Information and Assistance**  
☎ (800) 736-7401 [www.dir.ca.gov/DWC](http://www.dir.ca.gov/DWC)