

Teen Safety: Tips for Parents

A publication by Oklahoma Department of Labor partners

Who's Looking After Your Children Now?

Remember how carefully you looked after your children when they were little – making sure they were buckled into a car seat properly, that they got their immunizations, wore their bicycle helmets, and that they were warm and safe, well-fed and well-rested?

You made sure they brushed their teeth, said their prayers and never talked to strangers. And now, they're teenagers.

Teenagers may not keep their rooms clean, but that doesn't mean they're lazy. Eighty percent of American teenagers work during their high school years.

So, who's making sure they are safe now?

Most parents don't realize the need to be concerned about health and safety in the workplace, because they assume their children will be safe at work and that someone is looking out for them. Most teenagers are eager to get out into the world, get a job and earn some money. Teens have a lot to offer, but realistically, they are inexperienced and anxious to please.

For this reason, they may be hesitant to ask questions on the job, and fear being looked upon as being "stupid". They strive to please their new employer, just as they have strived to please you while they were growing up.

This can make them vulnerable to hazards on the job.

The time to start talking to your teens about job safety is before they get a job – but it's also never too late to start. Encourage them to ask about safety procedures when they go to a job interview. Tell them they should expect to get safety training when they start a new job and shouldn't be afraid to walk away from a job they feel is unsafe.

Remind them that no job is worth their life or health. Fingers, eyes and your life cannot be replaced. "You were looking for a job when you found this one. You can find another job."

If your teenagers are already working, it's important to find out as much as possible about the conditions in which

they work. Talk to them about their jobs – not just the rate of pay and benefits, but about the actual tasks they receive. Use your built-in parent "radar" to detect potential risks and ask about how safety is handled on the job. Help prevent workplace injuries. Let your teens know that you want them to say "no" to unsafe work conditions and that you'll support them in that decision. As the saying goes, "better safe than sorry."



What you should know about Teen Safety:

Page 2 – Basic Rights for Teens ... remind your teens about their rights

Page 2 – Questions to Ask Your Teen ... Q&A about teen safety

Page 3 – Resources for Teen Safety ... Federal and state agency contact info

Page 3 – Understanding Child Labor Laws ... prohibited occupations for teens



Many parents assume their teen...

...works in a safe environment

You should know that over 200,000 teens have job-related injuries every year. Over 65,000 teenagers are treated in emergency rooms for workplace injuries and nearly 70 teens are killed on the job each year.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

...has received proper health and safety training from their employer

The only way you really know is to ask your child directly. 56% of young workers surveyed reported they had not received any training before taking on a new task.

Source: Industrial Accident Prevention Association



...will tell them if they think their workplace is unsafe

Young workers are usually afraid to speak up; and they fear their parents' interference may jeopardize their jobs. Encourage them to talk to their supervisors and health and safety representatives.



Basic Rights

Remind your children that by law, they have **basic rights**, including:

1. The right to a safe and healthful workplace.
2. The right to know about hazard in the workplace and what to do to prevent injuries from those hazards.
3. The right to report a hazard to their supervisor. If the employer refuses to address the hazard, the employee has a right to file a complaint with OSHA, no matter what their age.
4. The right to refuse work that they believe, in good faith, can be dangerous to themselves or others.



Basic Responsibilities

They also have **responsibilities**, including:

1. **Work safely:** they must use all machinery and equipment in the way they were trained, or not at all, if it is a prohibited activity.
2. **Report hazards:** if they know OSHA's laws are not being followed, or they suspect a hazard, it's their responsibility to speak up.
3. **Use appropriate protective equipment:** While child labor laws do prohibit teens from working in hazardous industries, there are times when they will be required to use personal protective equipment. Tell them to wear their safety gear – it's the law!

Questions to ask your teen about the workplace:

- Were you given a safety orientation and information on rules of the workplace before you started work?**
- Does your supervisor work in or near your work area?**
- Does your supervisor provide on-the-job performance feedback, including information and advice on how to work safely?**
- Do you report hazards or concerns to your supervisor and do you feel comfortable doing so?**
- When you report concerns, are they promptly addressed?**
- What tasks do you normally perform at work?**
(Familiarize yourself with the place they work, the people and jobs they perform. Ask around and make sure you're comfortable that it's a safe place to be. Check OSHA inspection records on-line at www.osha.gov/oshstats to see if the facility has a history of OSHA violations. Visit your child's job site. You won't be the first parent to show up at your teens' workplace.)
- Are you tired at work, or at school?**
Keep an eye on the balance in your teenager's life. It's a fact that teens develop cognitively and physically into their early 20's, so they have an increased need for sleep. A hurried cycle of full-time school and part-time job, home work and a social life, combined with a lack of rest can create stress and fatigue, leading to poor performance in school and an increased risk of injury at work and while driving.
- Do you have to climb or work at heights? Do you lift and carry heavy objects?**
If the answer is yes, ask how they were trained, and what equipment they use to do these things safely.
- Do you know what kind of protective equipment to wear and have you been trained on how to use it properly?**
You wouldn't let your kids go play football without protective gear, so don't let them go to work without any safety equipment the employer requires (including: safety shoes, protective eye-wear, gloves, etc.)
- Do you work with chemicals? Have you received training in their use? Have you been provided with copies of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?**
OSHA requires employers to train their employees on the hazards of the workplace. The Hazard Communication Standard specifies training requirements for all employees who handle chemicals, or work in areas where they may be exposed to chemicals.
- Have you been trained on how to report an injury or illness on the job?**
The OSHA Recordkeeping Standard requires employees not only to develop procedures for employees to report on-the-job injuries and work-related illnesses, but they are required to train employees on the procedure, and what to do if they become injured or ill due to workplace conditions.



No job is worth your child's life!

The Oklahoma State Department of Labor, Federal OSHA and the Oklahoma Safety Council recognize the importance of establishing a collaborative relationship to foster an awareness of safety and health among young workers in Oklahoma. This publication has been developed in cooperation with our partners to promote teen safety in the workplace.

Our partners on the Internet:



Learn more about workplace safety at OSHA's Teen Worker webpage – www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/



Learn more about workplace safety at Oklahoma Safety Council's webpage – www.oksafety.org



Information on child labor laws in Oklahoma are available on the "publications page" at ODOL's website – www.labor.ok.gov

Understanding Oklahoma's Child Labor Laws

14

Fourteen (14) years of age is the minimum age for work.

Work Permits

Issued by the school, 14 and 15 year-olds are required to get a work permit from their school before they begin work.

Hours of Work 14 and 15 year-olds may work:

From the Tuesday after Labor Day to May 31st

- ◆ 3 hours on a school day
- ◆ 8 hours on a non-school day;
- ◆ 18 hours in a school week
- ◆ between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

From June 1st to Labor Day

- ◆ 8 hours on a non-school day;
- ◆ 40 hours in a non-school week
- ◆ between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Break Periods

- ◆ 30 minutes for every 5 hours worked
- ◆ 1 hour for every 8 hours worked.

All minors (under the age of 16) are prohibited from working in the following occupations:

- Construction
- Cooking or baking
- Fryers or grills
- Hoisting devices
- Ladders or scaffolds
- Lawn mower or weed eater (*other than working for self*)
- Loading and unloading
- Manufacturing, mining or processing
- Motor vehicles or service as helpers on vehicles
- Power-driven machines or equipment
- Public messenger service
- Public utilities and communications
- Slicers and sharp knives
- Transportation of persons or property by rail, highway, air, water, pipeline or other means
- Warehousing or storage, and
- Any other occupation declared particularly hazardous by federal law, federal regulations or the Commissioner of Labor.

Jobs Teenagers Can Do Include: office and clerical work, cashiering, selling, modeling, artwork, work in advertising departments, window trimming and comparative shopping, pricing or tagging (by hand or machine), assembling orders, packing and shelving, bagging and carrying out customers orders, errands and delivery work **by foot, bicycle and public transportation only**, kitchen work, dispensing gasoline and oil, courtesy service on premises of gasoline service station, car cleaning, washing and polishing, cleaning fruits, vegetables and stocking goods, when performed in areas physically separate from areas where meat is prepared for sale and outside freezers or meat coolers.

Note: Federal Regulations may vary from state regulations. Go to www.youthrules.dol.gov for additional information on federal regulations.