

# Are You a Working Teen?



Protect Your Health  
Know Your Rights

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Labor Occupational Health Program  
University of California, Berkeley

1998

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

Every year **70 teens die** from work injuries in the United States. Another **64,000 get hurt** badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

Here are the stories of three teens:

- 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.

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 Are My Rights on the Job?

By law, your employer must provide:

- A safe and healthful workplace.
- Training about health and safety, including information on chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
- Protective clothing and equipment.
- Payment for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
- At least the minimum wage, \$5.75 an hour as of March, 1998. In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first three months, if you are under 18. Call toll-free ☎ 1-888-275-9243 for more information.

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.

## 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>

## Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?

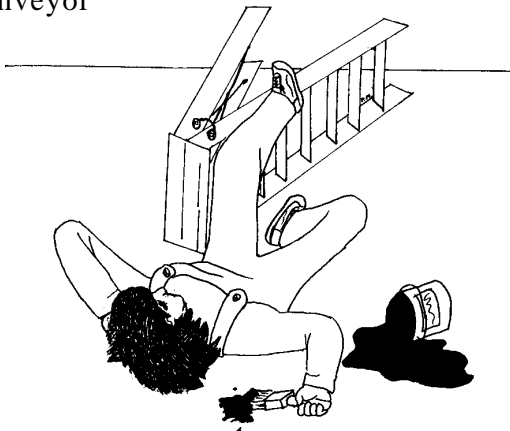
NO! There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.

**In California no worker under 18 may:**

- Drive a motor vehicle or forklift on the job
- 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
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages
- Work where there is exposure to radiation

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

- Do baking or cooking on the job (except at a serving counter)
- Work in dry cleaning or a commercial laundry
- Work on a ladder or scaffold
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor



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

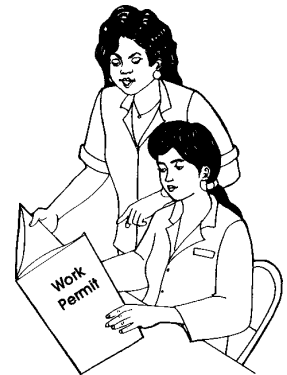
YES! There are many other restrictions regarding the type of work you can and cannot do.

If you are **under 14**, there are even stricter laws to protect your health and safety.

Check with your 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 (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

## 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. (There are exceptions for students in work experience programs.)

Work Hours for Teens		
	Ages 14 and 15	Ages 16 and 17
<b>Work Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not before 7 am or after 7 pm during the school year</li> <li>• Not during school hours</li> <li>• 7 am–9 pm during the summer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not before 5 am or after 10 pm on school nights</li> <li>• Not before 5 am or after 12:30 am when there is no school the next day</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum Hours When School Is in Session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 hours a week, but not over:</li> <li>• 3 hours a day on school days</li> <li>• 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48 hours a week, but not over:</li> <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 Need Help?

- Talk to your boss about the problem.
- Talk to your parents or teachers.
- For health and safety information and advice, call U.C. Berkeley's Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP).
  - ☎ (510) 642-5507
- If necessary contact one of these California government agencies: (your local number can be found in the State Government pages.)
  - Cal/OSHA (under Industrial Relations Dept.)—to make a health or safety complaint.
    - ☎ (415) 972-8500
  - Labor Standards Enforcement (under Industrial Relations Dept.)—to make a complaint about wages or work hours.
    - ☎ (415) 557-7878
  - Fair Employment and Housing—to make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination.
    - ☎ (800) 884-1684

You have a *right* to speak up!

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem.

