

Employing Minors in Construction

Minors between the ages of 15 and 17 that are employed in construction have a seven times greater chance of being fatally injured than their peers working in other industries. Because of the dangerous nature of the field, the Department of Labor (DOL) imposes restrictions on the type of work and number of hours that minors are permitted to perform in construction. Become familiar with these regulations to stay in compliance with federal law. Of course, state laws may have stricter laws regarding the employment of minors. Always consult your local jurisdiction before beginning employment.

Minors Under 16 Years of Age

Those under 16 years of age may only perform office or sales work in the construction industry. They may not be employed on a construction site. The federal rules also limit the number of hours and times of day that such minors may be employed.

Minors Age 16 and 17

Those employed at age 16 or 17 may work on construction sites, but there are several tasks or jobs that are deemed too hazardous for them to perform, such as the following:

- Working in occupations involving mixing, handling or transporting of explosive compounds
- Driving a motor vehicle or working as an outside helper (17 year olds may drive automobiles and trucks on an incidental and occasional basis if certain criteria are met)

- Riding on most construction elevators and operating or assisting in the operation of cranes, hoists, forklifts, Bobcat loaders, front-end loaders, backhoes and skid steer loaders
- Loading, operating and unloading most trash compactors and balers

Become familiar with these regulations from the Department of Labor to keep young workers safe and stay in compliance.

- Operating power-driven woodworking machines and metal forming, punching and shearing machines—including portable machines
- Operating power-driven circular saws, band saws, chain saws, reciprocating saws, guillotine shears, wood chippers and abrasive cutting discs—including portable machines
- Working in wrecking, demolition and shipbreaking
- Working in roofing and on or about a roof
- Working in excavation

This is not a complete list of hazardous occupations, and there are some exceptions provided for 16- and 17-year olds who are apprentices and student learners in approved programs.

Provided by Alongi Santas Insurance Agency

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Those Over 18

Individuals age 18 and older may perform any work in construction.

Recommendations for Employers

In addition to understanding labor laws, there are additional steps you can take to protect young workers:

- Recognize potential hazards.
- Eliminate any issues present in your workplace that could injure a young worker.
- Make sure that equipment used by workers is safe and legal.
- Supervise young workers.
- Be certain that young workers are appropriately supervised at all times.
- Inform supervisors and adult workers of the tasks that teens should not perform.
- Make sure that young workers are appropriately supervised at all times.
- Label the equipment that teens cannot use, or color-code their uniforms so that others know they may not perform certain tasks.
- Periodically verify through supervisors that teens are obeying safety practices.
- Provide training.
- Educate young workers to ensure that they recognize hazards and are competent regarding safe working practices.
- Training should include how to prepare for fires, accidents, violent situations and protocol for injuries. Teens need to know that they have a right to file a claim to cover their medical benefits and lost work time if they are injured.
- Have young workers demonstrate that they can perform assigned task safely and correctly.
- Implement a mentoring or buddy system for new young workers. Have either an adult or an experienced teen worker act as a buddy, and answer questions to help the inexperienced worker learn the ropes of the new job.
- Ensure that equipment used by teen workers is both legal and safe.
- Develop an injury and illness prevention program.
- Work with supervisors and experienced staff members to create a comprehensive safety program that includes an injury and illness prevention initiative.
- Identify and solve safety and health problems that arise or typically have been an issue in the past.

Please visit www.youthrules.dol.gov/ for more information about employing minors in construction.