



Working Safe For Wisconsin Teens

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WISCONSIN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

Wisconsin Department of Health Services | Division of Public Health

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Teens at Work

Unfortunately it's common for teens to get hurt or sick on the job.

One teenager is injured **every 9 minutes** on the job in the U.S. That's 158,000 teens under 18.

Why?

- Unsafe equipment or hazards
- Stressful conditions
- Working too fast to make a deadline
- Working at a job that the law does not allow you to do

Who gets hurt or sick, and in what kinds of jobs?

- 70,000 teens a year are hurt badly enough that they have to go to the ER.
- 38% of teens injured at work had jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry.
- 21% of teens injured at work had retail jobs.

No one should be dying to work!

Every year, 70 teens die from work injuries in the U.S. Young workers were **45 times** more likely to die from **farm and agricultural injuries** than from injuries in all other industries combined.

Some kinds of work hazards

- Slippery floors
- Hot cooking equipment
- Sharp objects
- Poor computer workstation design
- Toxic chemicals in cleaning products and pesticides
- Blood on discarded needles
- Violent crimes
- Farm or agricultural machinery
- Confined spaces (this means working in a space big enough to enter but with limited ways to enter or exit—like tanks, silos, pits, tunnels, and other spaces)

These are hazards that can hurt you or make you sick right away. There are also hazards that may not seem to be a problem now but can make you sick many years after working at a job. Examples are certain chemicals, dusts, and physical agents like radiation and noise.



Healthy Work Environment and Your Rights

You have the right to a safe, healthy work environment.

What does a healthy work environment have?

- Training on chemicals and other health and safety hazards.
- Protective clothing and equipment (personal protective equipment, or PPE), and training on how to use PPE.
- An emergency action plan.
- Worker's 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 three days.
 - Other benefits if you become permanently disabled.

All young workers have these workplace rights:

- **The right to be paid for your work.** Wisconsin's minimum wage is currently the same as the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Some jobs are exempt from minimum wage laws. (For more details, see the [Wisconsin Workforce Development website](#).)
- **The right to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment** because of your race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy status, national origin, disability, or age.
 - Examples of workplace harassment include: lewd jokes, racial or ethnic slurs, pressure for sexual favors, unwelcome comments about religion, or offensive pictures or graffiti.
 - If discrimination does occur in your workplace, you have the right to report this and not be treated differently by your employer (see page 7 for contact information).
- **The right to request reasonable workplace accommodations** for religious beliefs or a disability.

What should I do if my workplace is unsafe or unhealthy?

First, let your employer know if you believe your workplace is unsafe or unhealthy. If you can, work with your supervisor to correct health and safety hazards. By law, you cannot be discriminated against for reporting unsafe or unhealthy working conditions in the workplace.

If your job is immediately dangerous to your life or health, you may refuse to work. You can report safety problems to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) if needed (see page 7 for contact information).



What Jobs Can I Work in Wisconsin?

Because laws can change, it's best to check with the Department of Workforce Development about which jobs teens can do: 608-266-6860 (Madison) or 414-227-4384 (Milwaukee). Find more information about Wisconsin child labor laws on the [Department of Public Instruction website](#).

In Wisconsin, no worker under age 18 may do these tasks:

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as 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.
- Sell, serve, or give away alcohol.
- Work where there is exposure to radiation.

No worker under age 16 may do these tasks:

- 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 commercial laundry.
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work.
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor.
- Work on a ladder or scaffold over 6 feet high.

What are your 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 coworkers.
- 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.

By law, your employer cannot punish you for reporting a workplace problem or injury, or for claiming worker's compensation.

There are tasks you cannot do.

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 yardwork. Check with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD, 608-266-6860), school counselor, or job placement coordinator.

You need a work permit.

If you are under age 16 and plan to work, you must get a work permit from your school or school district office. Your employer must have your work permit on file before you begin working. More information is available on the [DWD website](#).



What Hours Can I Work in Wisconsin?

There are certain hours and times of day teens may work.

If you are a young worker under 18, you are considered a minor. There are certain hours and times of day you may work. **See the table to the right for 14- and 15-year-old work rules.**

- **If you are over 16**, you cannot work during hours of required school attendance. Otherwise, your hours are not limited.
- **If you are under 16**, you may work up to seven days per week in the delivery of newspapers and in agriculture. In most other types of labor, you may only work six days per week.
- **If you are under 18**, you may not work more than **six** consecutive hours without having a 30-minute, duty-free meal period.
- **If you are 16 and 17 years of age** and are employed after 11:00 p.m., you must have **eight** hours of rest between the end of one shift and the start of the next shift.

14- and 15-year-old work rules

	After Labor Day through May 31	June 1 through Labor Day
Days of the week	Daily hours	Daily hours
Non-school days	8 hours	8 hours
School days	3 hours	3 hours
Weeks of the year	Weekly hours	Weekly hours
Non-school weeks	40 hours	40 hours
School weeks	18 hours	18 hours
Permitted time of day	7 a.m. to 7 p.m. 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.	

Adapted from the Department of Workforce Development Equal Rights Division ([ERD-9212-P](#) [R.12/2011])



What if I Get Hurt on the Job?

Tell your supervisor right away.

- If you're under 18, **tell your parents or guardian(s).**
- **Get emergency medical treatment** if needed.
- **Request a claim form** from your employer if they do not give you one right away. Fill it out and return it to your employer. This helps ensure that you receive worker's compensation benefits.

Worker's compensation: What you need to know

Generally, you can receive benefits:

- Even if you are under 18.
- Even if you are a temporary or part-time employee.
- No matter who was at fault for your job injury.
- Even if you are not a legal resident of the U.S.

You can't sue your employer for a job injury.

If you are injured, what are your responsibilities?

- Tell your employer about a work-related illness or injury as soon as possible.
- Submit to reasonable medical treatment.
- Submit to reasonable examinations scheduled by the insurance carrier.
- Tell doctors how the injury occurred and if you believe your injury may be work related. If possible, do this before you are treated.
- Tell the insurance carrier how to contact you.

For more information contact Wisconsin's Worker's Compensation Division (find contact information on page 8).



I Have More Questions

If possible, first talk to your supervisor, safety officer at work, parents, teachers, or job training representative about the problem. If you don't get the help you need, here are contacts that may be able to help you.

I have a question or concern about workplace safety.

Wisconsin's Occupational Health Program

Our program can answer questions about workplace safety and health at dhsocchealth@dhs.wisconsin.gov or 608-266-1120. Our website has more information for workers at dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health.

NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)

NIOSH is the part of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that studies workplace safety and health. You can ask questions about workplace safety and health at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), and their website is at cdc.gov/niosh.

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

If you want to file a complaint about possible worker safety and health violations at a privately owned business, a place to start is the regional OSHA office. The contact information for Wisconsin depends on where you live, and is located [on their website](#). You can [file an OSHA complaint](#). Many complaints are handled informally by OSHA. Whistleblower provisions are designed to protect employees who

file a complaint from losing employment or pay, and OSHA has a whistleblower liaison. OSHA's main website is osha.gov.

National Young Worker Safety Resource Center

You will find health and safety information and advice, with many materials in Spanish. Contact them at 510-643-2424 or their website youngworkers.org.

Cultivate Safety

If you do **farm or agricultural work**, cultivatesafety.org has information on how to work safely.

I have a question or concern about sexual harassment or discrimination in my workplace.

- **Wisconsin Equal Rights Division:**

608-266-6860

dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/civilrights/

- **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:**

800-669-4000

www.eeoc.gov/youthwork



I Have More Questions

I need more information about benefits for injured workers or worker's compensation.

Wisconsin Division of Worker's Compensation can be reached at 608-266-1340 (Madison), 414-227-4381 (Milwaukee), and 920-832-5450 (Appleton) | dwd.wisconsin.gov/wc/

I need more information on what hours I can work, or what kinds of jobs I can do.

All Wisconsin employers have to follow the **Wisconsin** child labor laws. Most businesses must also follow the **federal law**.

- For more information about **federal child labor laws**, call the local U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division at 608-441-5221 or visit dol.gov/whd/childlabor.htm.
- For more information about **Wisconsin's child labor laws**, call the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Equal Rights Division, at 608-266-6860 (Madison), 414-227-4384 (Milwaukee), or visit dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/laborstandards/workpermit/lawguide.htm
- Find a summary of Wisconsin child labor laws at dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/tran-child-labor-laws.pdf.

I want to know more about workplace safety.

Check out these links:

- [Young Workers - Hazards](#) (OSHA)
- [Young Workers - You have rights!](#) (OSHA)
- [Workplace Safety Program](#) (Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development)

Workplace Emergencies

Be prepared, plan ahead, and know what to do during a workplace emergency.

What is a workplace emergency, and what do I need to know?

A workplace emergency is an unforeseen situation that threatens employees, customers, or the public; disrupts or shuts down operations; or causes physical or environmental damage.

Being prepared, planning ahead, and knowing what to do in a workplace emergency is important to keeping safe at work.

Learn about your workplace's emergency action plan and what to do before an emergency happens.

If you work with chemicals, talk to your supervisor about the chemicals you'll be using before you start using them and learn how to handle them properly.

What is a workplace emergency?

Emergencies may be natural or man-made and include the following:

- Floods
- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Fires
- Toxic gas release
- Chemical spills
- Radiological accidents
- Explosions
- Civil disturbances
- Workplace violence resulting in bodily harm or trauma

Common workplace emergencies and what to do:

In the event of a fire:

If you smell smoke or suspect a fire burning somewhere in the building, alert others. Pull the fire alarm if available. Shut the door and get out of the building. Call 911 from outside.

A fire extinguisher can be used to put out certain types of fires. Letters on the fire extinguisher tell what type of fire it can be used for.

Remember: **A-B-C**. **(A)** Trash, wood, paper, **(B)** Liquids, gases, solvents, **(C)** Electrical equipment.

The steps for using a fire extinguisher can be remembered as **P-A-S-S**: **P**ull the pin; **A**im the nozzle, **S**queeze the trigger; **S**weep the extinguisher back and forth over the fire.

In the event of a chemical release:

- If an unknown chemical spills in your workplace, leave it alone and get your supervisor.
- If a chemical gets in your eye, immediately flush your eye with water for at least 15 minutes. Remove contact lenses if wearing them.
- Consult the **safety data sheet (SDS)** for the chemical. The SDS will contain some information about the potential hazards of a chemical, and what to do in an emergency. Your employer is required to have SDSs and to make them available to workers. They can also be found online.
- **Never mix ammonia and bleach** together when cleaning. The mixture releases chlorine gas, which can be deadly.
- If you come in contact with a chemical and you don't know what it is, call the **National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222** or visit [PoisonHelp.org](https://www.poisonhelp.org).

