

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP – 6/21/10 – YOUTH RULES: TEENS AT WORK

In 2008, there were 2.3 million workers between the ages of 15 – 17 in the US. That year, 139,000 teens were injured on the job. 436 died from work related injuries. As summer begins, young people will get temporary jobs. This gives employers a chance to “raise them right” and help young workers become effective and safe workers. How can you do that? Here’s some ideas:

“Child-Proof” your worksite. Adults prepare their home for the arrival of a child, removing things that could break easily or cause harm. Do the same for your office, store, warehouse, and worksite. OSHA requires a safe work place be provided for all workers, not just young ones, so this may be a good reminder to ensure your site is safe for all workers. Not sure how to do that? OSHA has some self assessment tools on their website, located through this link: http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/selfassess_tools.htm

Lay down the rules. You have a set of company rules and policies that you enforce to keep all your workers safe, as well as those required by OSHA. These young workers will need training to know what those rules are and how to apply them. What do you expect them to do in case of fire, chemical release or any emergency? How should they evacuate the work area, and where do you want them to report, and to whom? What do you want them to do if they become ill or injured? What are the hazards of your workplace, and how do you expect them to work safely? These young workers need to know the same safety information provided to all your workers.

Not until 18. There are some pieces of equipment that anyone under the age of 18 may not operate. These are things like forklifts, power operated bakery equipment and mixers, cardboard compactors, chain and circular saws, and a list of other similar equipment. You can see a full list, and download free “You must be 18 to operate” stickers and posters in both English and Spanish on OSHA’s Youth Rules! Site, linked here: <http://youthrules.dol.gov/posters.htm>

Be a coach. Or assign one. An experienced worker, who exhibits safe working habits is a good buddy to have working alongside young workers. They are immediately available to answer questions, show them how to do the job right – and safely – the first time.

Dress for success. Make sure the young worker has all the right equipment – including personal protective equipment (PPE). OSHA requires employers to provide PPE and train all workers how to use it, no matter the age.

Safe Driving. Whether or not the young worker drives during the course of their job, you can do them, and all drivers a favor by strictly enforcing a “No Distractions While Driving” policy. This includes cell phones, texting, talking with friends, reading maps, eating and drinking, and etc., etc., etc. For more information about teen driving safety, see the CDC’s site on safe driving – linked here: http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teen_drivers/index.html

For more information on safety requirements for young workers, see the OSHA site Youth Rules. <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/employers.html>