

The Safety & Health Advisor

Summer 2004



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Safety Considerations for Young or Seasonal Workers

At one time or another, an organization may employ seasonal help, which is typically comprised of young workers in high school or college. While the majority of seasonal employees are usually hired as "summer help", there are other times when hiring may occur such as winter holidays, school vacations or during "peak" production seasons. Eighty percent of U.S. teenagers work during their high school years. In 2001, 45,000 teens were injured at work, and 175 died as a result of an on the job injury.

Often times these young workers may be related to permanent employees and could possibly enter the workforce without following the typical hiring process, which can put them and the organization at risk. While the focus of this article is on younger workers, similar concerns may exist and principles applied for new, seasonal or temporary employees of any age (particularly migrant workers) or even the general workforce.

The best practice is to hire young/seasonal workers using the same procedures that are used to hire permanent employees and by providing the same safety orientation and specific safety training as well as avoiding placement into non-permitted occupations. Increased supervision is also an important consideration.

There are specific labor law requirements when employing workers under the age of 18 that address jobs permitted, hours permitted and minimum wages. This article will only cover non-agricultural youth workers and only non-permitted occupations. At the federal level, there are two laws that protect young workers, which are the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act. In addition to FLSA and OSHA, in Massachusetts there are additional Child Labor Laws.

There are seventeen (17) occupations declared to be hazardous by the U.S. Secretary of Labor for which anyone under age 18 is prohibited from working (with some minor exceptions). As we are primarily concerned with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,

the information provided is a compilation of federal and state laws with the most stringent being presented. In general, persons under age 14 may not work. The following are partial lists of excluded work (Refer to the websites at the end of this article for a complete listing and additional information).

Persons under 18 years old may NOT:

- Drive a motor vehicle, be a helper on a motor vehicle or drive a forklift
- Use meat slicers or power-driven bakery machines
- Work 30 feet or more above ground or water
- Use circular or band saws, guillotine shears, or box crushers
- Use power-driven woodworking machines or power-driven hoisting apparatus
- Use power-driven metal-forming, punching, or shearing machines
- Use buffing or polishing equipment
- Work in roofing, railway or excavation operations
- Oil or clean hazardous machinery in operation

In addition to the above list, persons under 16 years old may NOT:

- Operate power-driven machinery (except office machines or machines in retail or food service not otherwise prohibited)
- Cook or bake (except at soda fountains, snack bars, or cafeteria serving counters)
- Work in a manufacturing facility (e.g., a factory)
- Work on ladders or scaffolds
- Work in freezers or meat coolers
- Work in brick or lumber yards
- Work in construction, transportation, communications or public utilities (except doing clerical work away from heavy machinery)
- Work in warehouses (except doing clerical work)
- Load or unload trucks, railroad cars or conveyors
- Wash windows if window sill is more than 10 feet above the ground

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Despite various laws prohibiting certain types of work, there are still potential hazards faced by young workers in permitted jobs including temperature stress, noise, slips, trips, falls, strains, sprains, burns, cuts or eye injuries. Many of these injuries can have a life-long impact.

Younger workers may have more exposure to heat stress than their older counterparts due to their entry-level position within an organization such as working in hot kitchen areas or working outside. (*See related article on Heat Exhaustion in this issue.*)

As a person ages, it is normal to experience some level of hearing loss. An estimated 28 million Americans suffer some degree of hearing loss and one-third can be related to noise exposure. Young persons working in high noise environments increase their lifetime risk for hearing loss. **Noise-induced hearing loss is 100% preventable, but when damage is done it is permanent and irreversible.** To help prevent this potential loss, reduce noise levels in the work environment as much as possible through engineering controls or work practices such as limiting time to perform certain tasks, limiting time in certain areas or not allowing the use of portable stereo's with headsets (users often turn volume up in excess of surrounding levels creating a greater hazard). Require hearing protection such as ear plugs or muffs for employees working in high noise areas or operating noisy equipment and provide basic information on the effects of noise on hearing loss.

Slip, trip or fall injuries may occur anywhere, but are most common in wet areas, on icy surfaces or in areas with poor housekeeping. Young workers have a tendency to step over objects (rather than going around them) or jump down from elevated surfaces subjecting them to trip and fall injuries. *Many do not like to lace up or wear proper footwear.* To help minimize these exposures workers should wear appropriate footwear including slip-resistant shoes for normally wet areas such as kitchens. Liquid or food spills should be cleaned immediately and any wet areas should have portable warning signs. Proper housekeeping should be maintained to prevent slip or trip concerns. In the winter, walkways and parking areas should be kept clear and icy conditions treated. Young workers should be instructed to use stairs and hold railings, not jump down from elevated surfaces or skip stair treads and properly lace their footwear.

Strains and sprains can occur anywhere that workers are manually handling materials that are typically heavy, awkward or require extended reach or awkward body posture. Motions such as lifting, bending, twisting,

pushing, pulling, reaching or carrying should be done properly. Young workers typically do not understand lifting limits or may think they can lift more than they actually can. The best prevention is to train young workers on safe lifting methods and proper body mechanics and to know when to ask for assistance.

Eye injuries can occur when working in dusty environments, using chemicals, using certain type of permitted equipment or performing other tasks even though they may not be classified as hazardous. If there is a potential for any foreign object or material to injure the eye then eye protection such as safety glasses, goggles or face shield should be worn. Younger workers may be susceptible to peer pressure that it's not "cool" to wear safety glasses or goggles, so good education and supervision is important. Offering them different types of safety glasses or goggles to choose from might also improve their compliance with wearing them.

Burns and cuts, while typically minor in nature, can still occur especially in situations that use a lot of young workers such as restaurants, fast food, landscaping or other tasks where there is exposure to hot materials (i.e. equipment, cooking oils) or sharp objects (i.e. knives, tools). Ensure that workers are trained in how to handle hot items, knives or other sharp objects. Tell them to cut away from the body and keep hands and fingers out of the way. Require use of protective gloves depending on the nature of the work.

Numerous federal agencies, collectively known as the Federal Network for Young Worker Safety and Health (FedNet) have joined together to educate teens, their parents, counselors and employers on how young people can stay safe on the job. FedNet's new web-based product, Teen Summer Jobs: Safety Pays is available at www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/summerjobs/index.html. It provides teen worker safety and health materials in English and Spanish. Topics covered include safe driving, lawn care, life guarding, farm work, construction, parks and recreation and restaurants.

Another Internet link is www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers. The website provides additional links to FLSA information, various OSHA standards, Fact Sheets and e-Tools. In Massachusetts, basic information on Child Labor Laws may be found at www.mass.gov/dph/bhsre/ohsp/cll.htm, which is the Department of Public Health website.

Young workers can be a valuable asset to your organization, but need to be properly trained and supervised. That way they can become life-long contributors to our society and not a costly statistic.

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Combating Heat Exhaustion This Summer

Every year we hear reports of people who become ill or die as a result of summer heat. Heat is an environmental hazard that can cause specific illnesses, decrease productivity, and increase accidents. Tolerance for heat varies greatly among people, although no one is entirely immune to heat stress problems. The heat illnesses are heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Dehydration is the culprit because vast quantities of sweat must be produced to cool the body.

What are the symptoms of heat illnesses?

Heat Cramps: Brief, periodic cramps in muscles of the arms, legs or abdomen.

Heat Exhaustion: Tiredness, weakness, thirst and dizziness, with occasional headache, nausea, diarrhea and fainting; skin is moist.

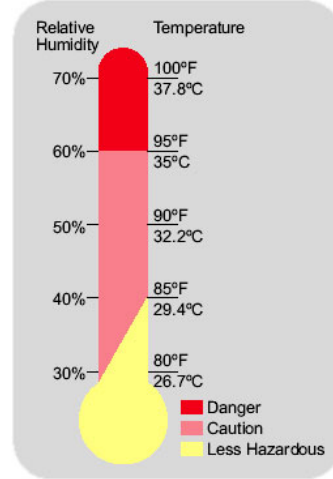
Heat Stroke: This is a life-threatening illness characterized by confusion, delirium, loss of consciousness, convulsions, coma, and hot dry skin.

What should you do if symptoms arise?

- Act immediately. If not treated, heat exhaustion may advance to heat stroke or death.
- Move the victim to a cool, shaded area to rest. Don't leave the person alone. If symptoms include dizziness or lightheadedness, lay the victim on his or her back and raise the legs 6 to 8 inches. If symptoms include nausea or upset stomach, lay the victim on his or her side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water (about a cup every 15 minutes) unless sick to the stomach.
- Cool the person's body by fanning and spraying with a cool mist of water or applying a wet cloth to the person's skin.
- Call 911 for emergency help if the person does not feel better in a few minutes.

Here is OSHA's heat stress equation and guidelines to predict heat illness:

**HIGH TEMP. + HIGH HUMIDITY+ PHYSICAL WORK
= HEAT ILLNESS**



How can you protect yourself and your coworkers?

- Learn the signs and symptoms of heat-induced illnesses and how to respond.
- Train your workforce about heat-induced illnesses.
- Perform the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day.
- Build up tolerance to the heat and the work activity slowly. This usually takes about 2 weeks.
- Use the buddy system, with people working in pairs.
- Drink plenty of cool water, about a cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable clothing, such as cotton.
- Take frequent, short breaks in cool, shaded areas to allow the body to cool down.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments.
- Avoid alcohol or beverages with caffeine. These make the body lose water and increase the risk for heat illnesses.

Finally, what factors put you at increased risk?

- Taking certain medications. Check with your health-care provider or pharmacist to see if any medicines you are taking affect you when working in hot environments.
- Having a previous heat-induced illness.
- Wearing personal protective equipment such as a respirator or protective suit.

The dog days of summer will arrive in no time. Managers should be prepared by taking preventive actions now and knowing the symptoms of heat-related problems should they occur.

References:

OSHA Publication 3154 (2002). This informational card on heat stress lists symptoms of heat-related illnesses and first aid techniques. A Spanish version, OSHA 3155 (2002) is also available.

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OSHA's Targeted Inspection Plan for 2004

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced in April its site-specific targeting (SST) plan for 2004. The plan will focus on approximately 4,000 high-hazard worksites for unannounced comprehensive safety and health inspections that reported high injury and illness rates in 2002.

This year's program will initially cover about 4,000 individual worksites on the primary list that reported 15 or more injuries or illnesses resulting in days away from work, restricted work activity, or job transfer for every 100 full-time workers (known as the DART rate). The primary list will also include sites based on a "Days Away from Work Injury and Illness" (DAFWII) rate of ten or higher (ten or more cases that involve days away from work per 100 full-time employees). Employers not on the primary list who reported DART rates of between 8.0 and 15.0, or DAFWII rates of between 4.0 and 10.0, will be placed on a secondary list for possible inspection. The average national DART rate in 2002 for private industry was 2.8, while the national average DAFWII rate was 1.6. Employers who did not respond to collection of the both the 2001 and 2002 data will also be included on the list.

OSHA will also inspect nursing homes or personal care facilities under this year's program. For the past two years, those workplaces were covered under a separate National Emphasis Program (NEP) that addressed specific industry hazards. Those hazards, including ergonomic stressors relating to resident handling, bloodborne pathogens/tuberculosis, and slips, trips and falls, will continue to be the primary focus of inspections in nursing and personal care facilities under SST-04.

Finally, the agency will again randomly select and inspect about 200 workplaces (with 200 or more employees) across the nation that reported low injury and illness rates for the purpose of reviewing the actual degree of compliance with OSHA requirements. These establishments are selected from those industries with above average DART and DAFWII rates such as bottled and canned soft drinks and steel wire and related products manufacturing. For a further explanation of this program go to:

http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive_pdf/CPL2_2004-02.pdf.

On May 6, 2004, OSHA issued a news release on its web site seeking public comment until July 6, 2004 on its Site-Specific Targeting (SST) inspection program. They want to determine more accurately how the program is accomplishing its goal of targeting the nation's most hazardous workplaces for inspection.

The SST program, first implemented in 1999, uses data from the OSHA Data Initiative survey to focus the Agency's resources on outreach, consultations, technical assistance and target workplaces that have reported high injury and illness rates. Establishments selected under the SST program receive both a comprehensive safety and a comprehensive health inspection.

OSHA is requesting suggestions that can help improve the SST program, as well as information on how the program is perceived by workers and employers. Click on www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=10814 to view questions for which the agency seeks comments on.

Auto Dealer Safety

New and used auto dealerships present a wide range of exposure to employee injury. There are many different jobs in a dealership that need consideration when developing a safety program. This article will focus on the **Service Shop, Body Shop and Parts/Storage**.

Common reported claims include the following:

- Slip/Falls- on icy parking lots, on steps, on wet floors
- Material handling- from lifting parts, tires, office furniture, emptying barrels
- Eye injuries- from particles, rust
- Trips- on uneven walking surfaces, over parts and boxes left in the walkways
- Struck by- falling parts
- Cuts and lacerations- handling sharp edges
- Injuries associated with motor vehicle accidents to salespeople, shop technicians and parts drivers

Service Shop

Evaluate the housekeeping in the service shop. Are the technicians' service bays cluttered? Is time set aside weekly to clean and organize the service bays and shop?

Check to see if there are any tripping hazards. Are lifts brightly painted so employees do not trip over lifts? Are there hoses or cables in the aisles?

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Check the lighting. Are there burned out light bulbs? Any area's dimly lit making it harder to see the task at hand?

Are walking surfaces even? No sudden changes in grade of floor? No cables or wiring running across the floor?

Train employees to not catch falling parts such as regulators. Let the part drop to the floor. In most cases, the cost of the part will be less than the cost of a back injury.

Are there **eye wash stations**? Are they tied into the building's plumbing? It should take no longer than 10 seconds for an employee to reach the eye wash station. Check the condition of the eye wash station weekly to make sure they are clean and full (if using a portable eye wash station).

Are containers of chemicals kept closed? Are all chemical containers labeled? Are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) obtained and kept in a notebook? Have the employees been trained in **OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard**?

Evaluate the **material handling equipment**. Are there transmission jacks and are they in good repair? Are there lift tables and hand trucks available to move heavy parts?

Tires should not be stored on upper shelves of storage or on mezzanines or other hard to access places. How are truck tires lifted and moved to reduce the potential for muscle strains? Are there tire lifts available?

Are there **oily waste can receptacles** to place used oily rags? Oily rags should not be stored in open top containers. The oil soaked rags could self-combust leading to a fire. The containers should be approved metal oily waste can receptacles with self-closing lids.

Are safety gloves used for handling sharp objects? Have safety gloves been issued to the employees?

Are safety glasses issued? Are the employees wearing safety glasses, especially when conducting jobs that emit dust, flying particles, and rust? Are safety glasses located near the grinder and at the battery changing operation?

When servicing batteries, are acid resistant gloves, gauntlets, aprons and eye protection available and worn? Are battery service areas separated from other areas and adequately ventilated?

Vehicle Lifts- is there regularly scheduled vendor preventive maintenance? Check for leaks? Are oil levels to required standards? Lifts painted in bright contrasting colors, so that they are readily visible? Are safety devices maintained fully operable?

Hand and portable tools in good repair? Kept in an organized manner?

Are exhaust elimination systems installed? Have the hoses been pulled out of the flooring leaving holes, which can lead to a trip and fall?

Any limited visibility areas observed? Driving areas are clear and well marked?

All machines properly guarded? Employees should tie back long hair, should not wear loose clothing, jewelry, watches or rings.

Are ladders in good repair and the appropriate type? Please see Atlantic Charter Insurance's Safety and Health Newsletter Winter 2004, which contains an article "Ladder Safety".

Exterior- many claims are the result of uneven parking lots or ice on the parking lots. Are exterior parking lots well lit? Are surfaces even to prevent tripping? Paving in good repair? Ice melt or sand applied frequently during inclement weather? Are employees wearing slip resistant shoes with thick rubber soles?

Body Shop

Personal protective equipment should be worn when spray painting. Is respiratory protection provided and used? **OSHA's Respiratory Protection program** in place? Training in use and care of respirators provided? Are users of respirators fit tested and medically checked? Are respirators clean and stored in sealed containers? Are respirator filters changed on schedule?

Flammable liquids stored in approved metal flammable liquids cabinets or flammable liquids storage rooms? Flammable and combustible liquids bonded and grounded? Is there a flammable liquids storage room? Is the room ventilated?

Are good housekeeping practices followed? No excess clutter or discarded car parts?

Are employees trained in **OSHA's Hazard Communication** standard? Are Material Safety Data Sheets obtained and on file for every chemical used? Are containers of chemicals kept closed and properly labeled?

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Floors in good repair? Even walking surfaces?

Eye wash stations plumbed? If not plumbed, are portable eye wash stations clean and bottles full?

Safety glasses and safety gloves provided and worn?
Welding shields worn?

Parts and Storage

Heavier parts stored in the mid racks, not on top shelves or bottom shelves?

Parts easy to access? Rolling metal safety ladders used to access parts or supplies?

Conveyors to move parts to first floor from basement or second floor storage rooms? Stock not blocking aisles?

Are aisles free from tripping hazards? Parts stored neatly on shelves and not protruding into aisles?

Forklifts

Are operators properly certified? Training provided?

General safety

Is there a No Smoking policy in effect? Is it enforced?

Designate a separate eating area. There should be no eating in the work areas.

Motor vehicle records should be obtained and evaluate before letting an employee drive for the company. Driver licenses should be checked at least annually.

Certificates of insurance should be obtained on all subcontractors. No subcontractors should be allowed on the premises to do work without supplying certificates of insurance with appropriate limits and coverage.

Fire extinguishers- appropriate type and size and mounted on walls? Fire extinguishers on a service contract?

Exits kept clear of blockage? Are there illuminated EXIT signs installed above the emergency exits?

Handrails provided on staircases? Non-slip treads installed on steps?

Are there doormats so customers can wipe their feet before entering the showroom?

Self-inspections done weekly? Deficiencies identified and follow up conducted to make sure deficiencies are corrected?

Members of a dealership's safety committee or managers can be assigned the task of inspecting the service and body shops to identify safety hazards. If there are safety hazards, the hazards should be documented and reported to the appropriate management individual for corrective action. Atlantic Charter Insurance Company's Safety and Health Consultants can work with you to develop **self-inspection checklists** to assist in identifying specific hazards at your dealership.

If you're looking for additional assistance in setting up your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Christine Boudouris, or Mark Hickox from Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.