

5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job

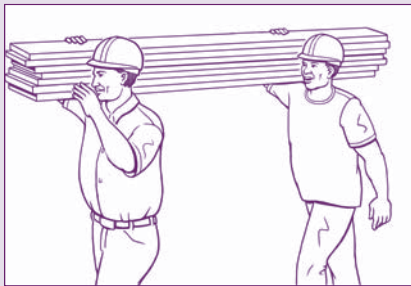
— Young Workers in Construction —



1. Get safety training
2. Look for hazards in your workplace
3. Follow safety rules
4. Know your rights
5. Ask questions and get help

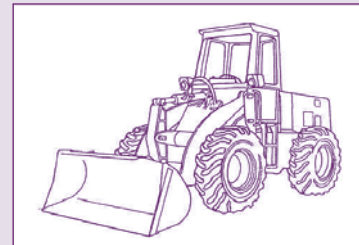
Many construction companies are eager to hire young workers, especially during busy times. **In the U.S., construction activities are restricted for workers under age 18, and prohibited for workers under age 16. Make sure you know the laws.** Because there are many hazards in construction, it is really important for you to get training. Find out what to do so you do not get hurt, like these young workers did. . . .

“Antonio worked for a builder he knew. One day he was carrying a piece of lumber along the roof of a house he was working on. He backed into a chimney hole that had not been covered and fell to the concrete floor below. He survived, but spent months recovering from a broken back.”



“Fred was a laborer on a construction site. He had to lift and move things—bags of cement, lumber, bricks—all day. One day, while moving lumber, he felt a sharp pain in his back. He couldn’t move without hurting. He had to miss work for a week, and his back still hurts.”

“Saeed was in charge of directing the trucks coming into a large construction site. He was directing a dump truck to unload its load of sand when a front end loader backed down a ramp and ran into him. The front end loader backed over him and crushed his chest. He died 13 hours later from his injuries..”



It’s your boss’ job to make sure your workplace is safe!

This factsheet is for young people who work in construction. U.S. laws require employers to provide *all* workers with a safe place to work. There are also laws that give special protection to *younger* workers. Not all employers know about or follow these laws, and the laws are not always enforced. But it is important for you to know what your employer *should* do.

In construction work, your boss can do a lot to improve safety. For example, your boss should:

- Provide equipment that is safe to use, such as ladders and tools.
- Provide lifting equipment for moving heavy materials.
- Make sure that workers cover holes and put up temporary guard rails to prevent falls.
- Keep the construction site cleaned up, removing things workers might trip or fall on.
- Provide protective gear, including hard hats, safety goggles, ear plugs, and dust masks.
- Make sure there is enough ventilation when workers are painting or using chemicals.

It's your job to follow the 5 steps for staying safe!

1. Get safety training

The boss must train you to do *every* task that's part of your job, like how to handle any chemicals you need to use, how to lift safely, or how to use tools or ladders safely.

2. Look for hazards in your workplace

If you work in construction, there are many things that can hurt you or make you sick. You can spot these hazards before they cause a problem.

3. Follow safety rules

Use your training to protect yourself and other workers. Do every task the way you have been trained. Keep your eyes open and report any problems you see.

4. Know your rights

U.S. and state laws protect workers on the job. There are also special laws that protect workers under 18. These laws say:

- Employers must provide a safe workplace.
- Employers must provide workers' compensation to pay your medical expenses and lost wages if you get injured.
- Workers under 18 may not do certain dangerous tasks, and may only work certain hours (not too late, too early, or too long).

For more information go to www.youthrules.dol.gov or www.osha.gov/SLR/teenworkers.

5. Ask questions and get help

Pay attention. If something seems unsafe, ask about it. If you don't know how to do a task you are given, ask a co-worker or your boss for help. If that does not work, get help from someone else, such as a safety or union representative, teacher, or parent. For more information, contact:

- National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, www.youngworkers.org.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Teen Workers page, www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, www.youth.eeoc.gov.
- Your state labor dept., www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm or your state OSHA, www.osha.gov/dcsp.osp.

The *5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job* series includes an overview pamphlet on young worker job safety and specific factsheets on:

- Construction
- Agricultural Field Work
- Hotel Cleaning
- Restaurants & Food Service
- Motor Vehicle Repair
- Working in Shops & Stores

Construction Hazards

This chart lists some of the hazards you need to watch out for, and some things you can do about them. This chart does NOT include tasks that are prohibited for young workers under the age of 18 such as:

- Excavation, or digging trenches
- Work on roofs
- Demolition work
- Operating large or powered equipment
- Working with chemicals that require a respirator.

| | HAZARDS | WHAT YOU CAN DO |
|----------------|--|--|
| FALLS | Working on ladders or up high | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure ladders are stable before climbing. If the ladder could be bumped, secure it. • When using a ladder, use both hands when going up or down. Carry tools in a belt. • Make sure openings in the floor are covered and labeled. • Make sure temporary guard rails are in place to protect against falls.. |
| | Slippery or cluttered work areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep walkways free of things to trip or slip on. If you see a mess take care of it. • Coil up cords and hoses when you are not using them.. • Wear shoes with non-skid soles. |
| BODY STRAIN | Lifting, bending, and reaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lifting equipment, carts, or trolleys to move heavy items. • Get help when lifting heavy items. • Follow these safe lifting methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bend your legs , not your back, when you pick up something heavy. • Hold the heavy item close to your body. • Move to face the heavy object before you lift instead of twisting your body. |
| | Repetitive or awkward work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take regular breaks. • Take turns doing different types of tasks. |
| HIT BY OBJECTS | Falling materials, tools, equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a hard hat and safety glasses, provided by your boss. • Wear strong shoes. • Be alert to possible hazards (such as tools, bricks, or other things that might fall). • To prevent objects from falling, move them away from edges or put up a barrier. |
| CHEMICALS | Paints, solvents, lead, asbestos, wood dust, concrete dust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for information about the chemicals you use. Read the labels and follow instructions. • Wear goggles and gloves when needed. Your boss should provide them. • Do not use chemicals in enclosed spaces. Make sure there is air going through the work area. • If you need a respirator (e.g. around asbestos or lead), it is TOO DANGEROUS for young workers. • If the work is very dusty, use a dust mask provided by your employer. • Clean up wood dust and other dust regularly, with a wet mop if possible. |
| ELECTRIC | Faulty equipment, exposed power lines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use equipment that has a frayed cord, looks damaged, or is wet. Tell your boss about it. • Keep metal ladders and other metal materials away from electrical power lines. |
| OTHER | Noise / loud equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is so much noise that you need to shout to be heard, your hearing can be damaged. • Wear ear plugs or other hearing protection provide by your boss. |
| | Work in heat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink a lot of water. • Take rest breaks out of the sun or heat. • If you start to feel dizzy or sick to your stomach, tell a co-worker. Get out of the heat, drink water, and put water on your head and arms to cool down. |