

Teen Fatality Response Kit: For Youth

On May 12, 2021, Omar went to his afterschool job at a small tire shop where he'd been working part time since the previous summer. He worked there with another friend of his from high school—both were juniors. The shop only had 5 employees including the two students. Omar had a lot going for himself: he was a member of Future Farmers of America (FFA), was on the school's varsity soccer team, and had taken several automotive classes at school. He was a role model for his three young brothers and seemed to always have a smile for everyone.



Just before closing, someone came in with a flat tire. The teens agreed to change the flat tire and jacked up the car on one side with a hydraulic jack. The owner of the car also asked for an oil change, which this small business didn't typically offer. The teens knew how to do an oil change, so Omar jacked up the other side of the car to change the oil. When he was under the car, it shifted and fell off one of the jacks and crushed him. His friend had to get him out from under the vehicle. Omar died shortly after. Only one adult was at the shop, and wasn't where they were working.

The community was devastated—Omar's family, friends, and his employer and workmates.

There are many safeguards that should have protected Omar but didn't:

1. Omar should have had a work permit but didn't. Did he or his employer know that was required? The permit would have stated Omar couldn't work with hydraulic lifts.
2. California's child labor law prohibits workers under 18 from doing work that involves hydraulic jacks. Did Omar or his employer know this?
3. Safety training in automotive classes and at work should cover safe use of jacks and blocking or cribbing, as well as what laws protect teens in the workplace. Did Omar and his co-worker's training cover this? If it did, what conditions led the teens to ignore this training, or forget its importance?

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If you are a young worker:

- **Get a work permit.** If you are under 18, you must get a work permit application from your school or school district office (unless you have graduated.) This permit will clearly state what kind of work is prohibited for teen workers.
- **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.
 - Workers under 18 may not do certain dangerous tasks, and may not work too long, too late or too early. Make sure you know what you can and can't do under the law.
- **Get safety training.** Under the law, your employer must train you to do every task that's part of your job, like how to lift safely, how to use tools safely, or how to deal with difficult customers safely.
- **Follow safety rules.** Use your training to protect yourself and other workers. Do every task the way you have been trained. Ask questions if the rules don't make sense to you.
- **Look for hazards in your workplace.** Your employer must provide a safe workplace, but you should also look out for anything that you think might hurt you or make you sick. You can spot these hazards and tell your supervisor about them before they cause a problem.
- **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 supervisor for help. If that does not work, get help from someone else, such as a safety or union representative, teachers, or parent. For more information, contact:
 - www.youngworkers.org, Search for the "[Are you a working teen?](#)" Factsheet
 - Cal/OSHA, www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH
 - CA Labor Commissioner's Office, www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE
 - CA Fair Employment and Housing, www.dfeh.ca.gov
- **Think for yourself.** How does time pressure affect your ability to make a decision? Why might it be hard to say no?
- **Share this information** about what employers and teens should know with your family and friends—young people, parents, teachers and employers.