

# Health and Safety Awareness for Working Teens in Agriculture

<http://depts.washington.edu/worksafe>



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**Washington State Department of Labor and Industries,  
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June 12, 2006

Dear Educator,

Research has shown that agriculture is the most dangerous industry for young workers in the country. Between 1992 and 2000, agriculture accounted for 42% of all work related deaths among young workers. Half of these fatalities happened to teens who were younger than 15 years of age. The risk of a fatal injury happening to a young worker in agriculture is four times that of young workers employed in other industries.

Students who are working in agriculture, or participating in a Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE), may be exposed to safety hazards such as machinery, confined spaces, work at elevations, work around livestock, agricultural chemicals, noise, respiratory irritants and toxic gasses.

Unlike employment in other industries that prohibit young workers from doing some jobs until they reach age 18, in agriculture young workers may legally perform any agricultural task after they reach age 16. Also child labor laws do not cover workers under age 16 who work on their parents' or guardians' farms. Between 1992 and 2000, 76% of the fatal injuries to agricultural workers under age 16 involved work in a family business.

The Health and Safety Awareness for Working Teens in Agriculture curriculum was designed as a guide to assist agriculture educators in Washington teach basic concepts about workplace health and safety and workers rights. This curriculum is designed for use with students in grades 9 through 12. The information covered in this curriculum is relevant to students whether or not they are currently working.

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries has provided the funds necessary to develop and distribute this curriculum to you. In order to measure its effectiveness on student learning, we may ask for your cooperation in conducting a curriculum assessment.

Your feedback is important. If you find any corrections in the content that need to be made or if you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thanks again for making this information available to your students.

Sincerely,

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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES**

Employment Standards Program

*P.O. Box 44510 Olympia Washington 98504-4510; Phone: 360.902.5316*  
*[www.LNI.wa.gov/scs/workstandards/teenworker.htm](http://www.LNI.wa.gov/scs/workstandards/teenworker.htm)*

June 12, 2006

Dear Teacher:

In the course of using this material, many issues about child labor and workplace health and safety laws may arise. Students may realize that some of the job duties assigned to them are prohibited by law due to their age, or possibly that the restrictions for allowable work hours are being violated by their employer. If this is the case, you have the right on their behalf, to contact the Industrial Relations Agent (IRA) assigned to your area to report these possible violations. The list of area Labor & Industries' (L&I) offices with agents who can help you can be found on our web page, [www.lni.wa.gov/home/direct.htm](http://www.lni.wa.gov/home/direct.htm), or in the blue government section of the white pages. Often, a complaint about possible child labor violations will lead to an investigation of the situation. If other health and safety issues or concerns are also thought to be present, a referral may be made to a regional health and safety inspector. Your identity can remain confidential if you chose. Also, you should inform students that they also have the right to call Labor and Industries (L&I) if they ever have questions or concerns about the child labor laws or other health and safety regulations and whether or not their employer is following them appropriately. Teens have the right to the appropriate wage, as well as rest and meal breaks, too. Agents are also frequently available to come to a classroom to talk to students.

If you have questions or concerns about how to handle a particular situation, you may also contact me for assistance.

Have Fun With This Curriculum!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary E Miller".

Mary Miller, RN, MN  
Occupational Health Nurse  
[mmar235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:mmar235@lni.wa.gov)  
360.902.6041

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# How to Contact L&I: State of Washington Dept. of Labor and Industries

Website: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/>

Toll-free Phone Numbers

## **Office of Information and Assistance**

*1-800-547-8367*

Central contact for general questions about workers' compensation, workplace safety and health, and other L&I services.

## **Safety and Health Hot Line**

*1-800-423-7233*

Provides a menu of options callers can use to request information on safety and health standards, order publications and posters, etc.

## **Safety and Health Video Library**

*1-800-574-9881*

Use this number to reserve any of the more than 650 training videos in the video library

## **Crime Victims Compensation Program**

*1-800-762-3716*

Provides financial assistance to victims of violent crime—such as assault, domestic violence or child abuse—who meet specific eligibility requirements.

## **Governor's Industrial Safety and Health Conference**

*1-888-451-2004*

Registration information for the Governor's Industrial Safety and Health Conference.

## **Headquarters and Tumwater Field Office**

**Location:** 7273 Linderson Way SW, Tumwater, WA 98501-5414

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 44850, Olympia, WA 98504-4850

**Phone:** 360-902-5799

**FAX:** 360-902-5792

**TDD:** 360-902-4637

# How to Contact L&I: Field Offices



Location	Street Address	Phone, Fax, TTD
Aberdeen	415 W. Wishkah, Suite 1B Aberdeen, WA 98520-4315	360-533-8200 FAX: 360-533-8220 TDD: 360-533-9336
Bellevue	616 120th Avenue NE, Suite C201 Bellevue, WA 98005-3037	425-990-1400 FAX: 425-990-1445 TDD: 425-990-1450
Bellingham	1720 Ellis Street, Suite 200 Bellingham, WA 98225-4647	360-647-7300 FAX: 647-7310 TDD: 360-647-7299
Bremerton	500 Pacific Avenue, Suite 400 Bremerton, WA 98337-1943	360-415-4000 FAX: 360-415-4048 TDD: 360-415-4014
Colville	298 South Main Street, Suite 203 Colville, WA 99114-2416	509-684-7417 Toll-free 1-800-509-9174 FAX: 509-684-7416
East Wenatchee	519 Grant Road East Wenatchee, WA 98802-5459	509-886-6500 or 1-800-292-5920 FAX: 509-886-6510 TDD: 509-886-6512
Everett	729 100th Street SE Everett WA 98208-3727	425-290-1300 FAX: 425-290-1399 TDD: 425-290-1407
Kennewick	4310 West 24th Avenue Kennewick, WA 99338	509-735-0100 or 1-800-547-9411 FAX: 509-735-0120 TDD: 509-735-0146



# How to Contact L&I: Field Offices

Location	Street Address	Phone, Fax, TTD
Longview	900 Ocean Beach Highway Longview, WA 98632-4013	360-575-6900 FAX: 360-575-6918 TDD: 360-575-6921
Moses Lake	3001 W. Broadway Ave. Moses Lake, WA 98837-2907	509-764-6900 1-800-574-2285 (E. Wash. only) FAX: 509-764-6923 TDD: 509-754-6030
Mount Vernon	525 E. College Way, Suite H Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5500	360-416-3000 FAX: 360-416-3030 TDD: 360-416-3072
Okanogan	1234 2nd Avenue S. Okanogan, WA 98840-9723	509-826-7345 1-800-942-4387 (Eastern Wash. only) FAX: 509-826-7349 TDD: 509-826-7370
Port Angeles	1605 East Front Street, Suite C Port Angeles, WA 98362-4628	360-417-2700 FAX: 360-417-2733 TDD: 360-417-2752
Pullman	1250 Bishop Blvd S.E., Suite G. Pullman, WA 99163-0847	509-334-5296 or 1-800-509-0025 FAX: 509-334-3417
Seattle	315 5th Ave. S., Suite 200 Seattle, WA 98104-2607	206-515-2800 FAX: 206-515-2779 TDD: 206-515-2803
Spokane	901 N. Monroe Street, Suite 100 Spokane, WA 99201-2149	509-324-2600 or 1-800-509-8847 FAX: 509-324-2601 TDD: 509-324-2653
Tacoma	950 Broadway, Suite 200 Tacoma, WA 98402-4453	253-596-3800 FAX: 253-596-3956 TDD: 253-596-3887
Tukwila	12806 Gateway Drive Seattle, WA 98168-1050	206-835-1000 FAX: 206-835-1099 TDD: 206-835-1102
Vancouver	312 SE Stonemill Dr., Suite 120 Vancouver, WA 98684-6982	360-896-2300 FAX: 360-896-2345 TDD: 360-896-2304
Walla Walla	1815 Portland Avenue, Suite 2 Walla Walla, WA 99362-2246	509-527-4437 FAX: 509-527-4486 TDD: 509-527-4172
Yakima	15 W. Yakima Avenue, Suite 100 Yakima, WA 98902-3401	509-454-3700 or 1-800-354-5423 FAX: 509-454-3710 TDD: 509-454-2741

# Introduction

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## Why Teach Teens about Workplace Health and Safety?

Teaching teens about workplace health and safety helps prevent injuries to working youth and gives them life skills they can use throughout their working lives. Workers of all ages face hazards on the job. However a number of factors make young workers more likely to experience work-related injuries and illnesses.

### **Most Teens Work.**

Government figures estimate that 35 % of 16 and 17 year olds work at any given time.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that 80% of teens will have worked by the time they have finished high school.<sup>2,3</sup> Teens typically work at part-time, temporary, low-paying jobs. Most teens go to work after putting in a full day at school.

### **Teens are injured and killed on the job each year.**

In Washington State the rate of work injuries to teens is almost twice as high as that for adult workers. This is significant because child labor laws prohibit teens from working in many hazardous jobs, or from working as many hours per week as adults.<sup>4</sup>

Studies by the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) and other groups show that nation-wide about 70 teens die each year in work related incidents. Researchers also estimate that 200,000 teens are injured on the job each year, 64,000 of whom seek medical attention in hospital emergency rooms.<sup>5</sup>

### **Inexperienced workers are more likely to be injured.**

As new workers, adolescents are likely to be inexperienced and unfamiliar with many of the tasks required of them, unable to recognize workplace hazards, and unaware of their rights as young workers. Some of the positive traits of teens—their energy and enthusiasm, their need for increasing challenges and responsibility—when combined with their reluctance to ask questions or speak up about workplace concerns, can result in many young workers attempting tasks that they are neither trained for nor capable of performing safely.

**"The oven mitts we used to remove hot trays had huge holes in them. When I told my supervisor about them, he told us to put plastic bags inside the mitts."**

*— 17-year-old fast food employee*

## **Physical characteristics of teens may increase their risk of injury.**

Teens between the ages of 14 and 17 experience growth spurts and grow at very different rates. As a result, teens of the same age can vary dramatically in height, weight, and strength. Both larger and smaller teens may be susceptible to injury, though for different reasons. Small teens may not be able to reach high shelves or parts of equipment, or may lack the strength required for certain tasks. Larger teens may be given adult tasks because of their size, without taking into account their lack of experience or maturity or coordination! Job-related back injuries have been shown to be a problem among teens, especially smaller workers<sup>6,7</sup>.

## **Many industries that employ large numbers of teens are hazardous.**

Contrary to popular perceptions, national statistics show that many workplaces that hire teens—such as grocery stores, hospitals, nursing facilities and recreational services—are not necessarily safe; they have higher-than-average injury rates for workers of all ages.<sup>8</sup>

## **Teens frequently do not receive adequate health and safety training either in school or on the job.**

In recent surveys of young workers, nearly 50 percent of working teens report never having received health and safety training at work. The training materials that do exist typically are not geared towards educating youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have called for better health and safety training and education for teen workers.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

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## Acknowledgements

Many of the activities in this curriculum have been adapted from curriculum developed by other organizations also concerned with educating teens about workplace safety and health issues. These curriculums and groups include:

- **Starting Safely: Teaching Youth about Workplace Safety and Health.** Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards.
- **US Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) Teen Workers web site**
- **Participatory Curriculum Development in Agricultural Education; A Training Guide.** Rogers, A. and Taylor, P. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Rome. 1998 (ISBN: 92-5-104272-1)
- **You Make the Difference: A Health and Safety Education Resource for Teachers of Grades 10-12.** Interagency Regulatory Liaison Group (CPSC, EPA, FDA, DHHS, FSQS, DOA, OSHA, DOL). 1980
- **Your Work: Keepin' it Safe Video.** Labor and Occupational Safety and Health Program, University of California, Los Angeles
- **Safe Work, Safe Workers: A Guide for Teaching High School Students about Occupational Health and Safety.** Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Surveillance Program, the Children's Safety Network, Education Development Center, Inc.
- **Teens, Work, and Safety: A Curriculum for High School Students.** Labor and Occupational Health program, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, University of California, Berkeley

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