



NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE

2016 Five Most Dangerous Jobs for Teens

*Tips for teen workers, parents, and employers
to help working teens stay safe in the workplace*

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I. Introduction: Teens continue to get killed and hurt at work

Nearly 5,000 workers die on the job each year—each day, an [average of 13 workers are killed](#) on the job—some of those workers are teenagers. Each of those deaths are torture for the friends and family of the child worker.

Thousands of children are hurt on the job each year. Many parents don't think about their children getting hurt at work, but according to [the Children's Safety network](#), about every 9 minutes, a U.S. teen is hurt on the job.

In a typical year, 20-30 children die on the job in the U.S. Twenty years ago, that number was over 70 per year. In 2012, 29 children died while working. In 2013, that number fell sharply to 14, according to the [U.S. Department of Labor](#). The National Consumers League (NCL) was curious—and hopeful—to see if that drastic drop in fatalities would continue, but sadly, it did not.

[According to the BLS data for 2014](#), the most recent data that is available, 21 young workers under the age of 18 died in the U.S.—a 50 percent increase over the prior year. Although alarming, the 50 percent increase in the number of teen deaths between 2013 and 2014 would seem to represent a reversion to recent average fatality totals and the 2013 drop would seem to be an aberration. The increase bears watching however to ensure that the number does not continue to climb.

More than one-third of young worker fatalities in 2014, eight, were under the age of 16. An additional 41 workers aged 18 and 19 died. In all, 64 workers under 20 died. Every six days we are losing a teenager at work. For every family that loses a teen, their child's preventable deaths are an unspeakable tragedy.

The falling fatalities over the last two decades may represent fewer children working and it may be a reflection of jobs in dangerous industries dropping. The National Consumers League also believes that health and safety education efforts are helping to reduce teen fatalities.

Many teens lack the experience and sense of caution needed to protect themselves from workplace jobs. They are reluctant to refuse to do dangerous tasks or to ask for safety information. Research on the developing brain suggests that there are neurological reasons why teens do not always evaluate dangers properly—[the portion of the brain that causes adults to exercise caution is still developing](#) in teenagers.

In 2013, Blake Bryant, a 14-year-old, took a job as tree-trimmer in Palatka, Florida. His boss handed him a chain saw and hoisted him 50-feet high into a tree to cut some limbs. Tragically, Blake cut through his safety harness and plummeted 50 feet to his death. The employer, who

violated state law by asking Blake to do prohibited work, is now serving 15 years in prison for aggravated manslaughter. In a published [news article](#), his mother would later say, “I didn’t know he was climbing. Why would you send a 14-year-old in a tree with a chainsaw?”

NCL presents this report to help equip parents and teen workers to protect themselves against dangerous jobs and hazardous work situations. We also hope to educate the public about workplace dangers teen workers face and to help teens and their parents consider the safety of each job under consideration.

There is a shocking variety to the way teens die or are injured in the workplace. Here are some recent examples:

- Farm hand Heather Marie Barley, 17, of Buckley, Michigan died suddenly while working on a hog farm in December 2015. Heather was found unresponsive. Elevated levels of carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide were discovered through atmospheric testing. Michigan’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration speculated that the **toxic gases** may have come from a steam generator connected to a pressure washer.
- In December 2015, 19-year-old Mason Cox in Gastonia, North Carolina was working his first day on the job feeding tree limbs into a wood chipper. The operator heard something funny and went back to the chipper and found that Mason had been **pulled into the wood chipper**, killed instantly. The employer was so disturbed by the incident that he had a heart attack.
- That same month, 19-year-old Oscar Martin-Refugio was **shot in the heart by robbers** as he worked in a Bridgeport, Connecticut pizza shop. He died soon after. Two other workers were also shot.
- In October 2015, Catie Bolt, 13, and her 11-year-old twin sisters, were on a grain truck on their parents’ farm near Rocky Mountain House, Alberta when something went terribly wrong and the girls were **found smothered** under a load of canola seed.
- Grant Thompson, 18, was **killed by a snake bite** while working in a pet shop in Austin, Texas in July 2015. A cobra was missing. Grant’s parents owned the store. Interestingly, it is illegal to possess a “dangerous, wild animal” in Texas without a license, but a poisonous snake is not considered a dangerous wild animal by the state, according to news reports.
- In October 2014, an Idaho teen, 18-year-old Jeremy McSpadden, Jr., of Spokane Valley, Washington portraying a zombie at a Halloween haunted hayride died tragically. The boy, wearing a mask, emerged from a corn maze, approached a bus full of hay ride participants who were shooting paintballs at him and the other pretend “zombies.” Jeremy lost his footing and **fell under the rear wheel of the bus**. He was killed instantly.
- In August 2014, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Jonas King, a 15-year-old lost control of a skid-loader that **overturned into a manure pit, where he died of asphyxiation**.

Our condolences go out to the families of these teens who died tragically and unnecessarily. We hope that sharing their stories here might prevent other tragic deaths.

Jobs for teens are an important part of youth development, providing both needed income and teaching valuable work skills. A survey from Citigroup and *Seventeen* magazine released in August of 2013, found that [almost 80 percent of students](#) take at least a part-time job during the school year. [BLS data](#) for January 2016 found that 4.5 million teens between the ages of 16 and 19 were at work. Many teens take summer jobs—according to BLS data last year, just over half of teens were employed in July 2015.

A job can build confidence, teach social skills, and provide an array of other benefits. According to research in the January/February 2011 issue of [Child Development](#), teen jobs decrease the likelihood working teens will drop out of school—as long as teens work 20 hours or less each week during the school year—and they increase future earnings [Northeastern University's [Center for Labor Market Studies](#)].

II. NCL's Five Most Dangerous Teen Jobs

The National Consumers League publishes its annual list of the Five Most Dangerous Jobs for Teens to help youth workers and parents understand that work often involves unexpected health and safety risks and that teenagers, parents, and employers can take steps to minimize those risks.

NCL's Five Most Dangerous Teen Jobs in 2016 are:

- Tobacco harvester
- Agriculture: Harvesting crops and using machinery
- Traveling youth sales crews
- Construction and height work
- Outside helper: Landscaping, groundskeeping and lawn Service

The Five Most Dangerous Jobs for Teens are not ranked in order. They all share above average injury or fatality rates or present a work environment that is dangerous.

In the following sections, we discuss the dangers of these jobs.

III. Tobacco harvester

A 12-year-old cannot legally buy cigarettes in the U.S., but they are allowed to work in a tobacco field for 10- to 12- hours a day in 100-degree heat and suffer repeated bouts of nicotine

poisoning. This is legal because of decades-old exemptions to U.S. child labor laws that apply to agriculture. Teen tobacco workers do not die at the highest rate, but they do feel as if they are dying in large numbers.

A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, ["Tobacco's Hidden Children: Hazardous Child Labor in United States Tobacco Farming."](#) published in May 2014 found that three quarters of 141 child tobacco workers interviewed in North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee—the main tobacco-producing states—reported getting sick while working on U.S. tobacco farms. Many of their symptoms—nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, headaches, and dizziness—are consistent with acute nicotine poisoning (also known as “Green Tobacco Sickness”). A frequent comment from child tobacco workers who experience this illness is, “I thought I was going to die.”

Child tobacco workers often use dangerous, sharp tools and can work in tobacco drying barns at heights without protective equipment as they balance precariously on the top of wood beams that may be only one or two inches thick.

In addition to nicotine, farmworker children may also be absorbing a range of toxic pesticides commonly used in tobacco fields. Children often wear black garbage bags to protect them from these dual exposures but you can imagine what it’s like to wear a plastic bag in the 90- and 100-degree temperatures often found in tobacco fields.

To make matters worse, Human Rights Watch found that three of the four states that produce 90 percent of US tobacco (Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee) have failed to take sufficient measures to enforce the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) Field Sanitation Standard. This standard requires workers to be provided with fresh drinking water, hand washing facilities, and toilets. Most of the children interviewed by HRW were not provided with hand washing facilities or toilets, and some were not given sufficient drinking water. The absence of hand washing facilities significantly increases the risks of nicotine and pesticide exposure.

Using information from the OSHA Integrated Management Information System, HRW reports that from January 2010 to December 2013: Kentucky carried out only eight field inspections in tobacco; Tennessee carried out one field inspection; and Virginia carried out none. Only one of the four major tobacco-producing states, North Carolina, made meaningful attempts to enforce the Field Sanitation Standard, with 143 inspections during the time period, said HRW researchers.

The situation, with children as young as 12 (and HRW found about a dozen kids conducting lighter work in the fields who were under 12), is so absurd that it proved to be great material for the satirists at “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” who produced an entertaining, but alarming, report called [“Nicoteens.”](#) The clip is comical and allows you to hear young tobacco workers describing the work conditions in their own words, but child labor in U.S. tobacco is not funny. It’s embarrassing.

We share here the words of a 14-year-old girl who worked in tobacco fields (from an HRW interview) and suffered nicotine poisoning:

“My head started hurting, and I kind of felt like throwing up.” [The tobacco plants were dripping wet from dew and rain, and her clothes got soaked while she worked in fields.] “I just go home in my wet clothes.”

In 2011, the Obama Administration acted to implement regulations to protect working children from farm dangers, including tobacco work, but those rules were withdrawn in 2012 because of opposition from the farm community, and it appeared to NCL, fears that the controversial rules might cost Senate seats. Child Labor Coalition (CLC) members fought hard for those comprehensive protections, but health and safety advocates were no match for the resources of the agricultural lobby.

The wholesale withdrawal of occupational child safety regulations for farms left child workers in tobacco vulnerable to nicotine poisoning, pesticide poisoning, and other dangers. It’s time to fix this glaring consequence of the Administration’s complete pullback—it’s abdication of its responsibilities to protect children—and move forward to protect children in tobacco fields. In August 2014, the CLC sent President Obama a letter signed by 50 groups, representing millions of Americans, asking him to take action, but the President has been silent.

Congress is trying to respond with the “Children Don’t Belong on Tobacco Farms” bill in both the House (HR 1848) and Senate (S 974) that would ban child labor in U.S. tobacco. NCL joined the Child Labor Coalition, which it co-chairs, and 56 other organizations to urge members of Congress to support the legislation in an [open letter to Congress](#) in May 2015.

NCL continues to wonder why the Obama Administration is not doing more to deal with the problem of children performing this hazardous work. Earlier this year, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration released [a recommended practices bulletin](#) with guidance on reducing the hazards for tobacco workers. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) convened a meeting with several NGOs including NCL, CLC, and 16 members of the tobacco industry to discuss responses to the problem of children working in tobacco fields. So far, however, the Administration has taken no significant steps to protect children working in tobacco fields.

Several tobacco companies and two grower associations have acknowledged the danger of this work and its inappropriateness for young workers. The tobacco companies have implemented policies to prohibit the growers they use from hiring children under 16. The 2015 harvest was the first year that the new rules were applied and it is unclear how well the new policies are working or if they are working at all. NCL and its Child Labor Coalition partners continue to advocate for a ban on all child work in tobacco because of its dangers.

In 2015, HRW issued a follow-up report, “Teens of the Tobacco Fields—Child Labor in United States Tobacco Farming” focusing on 16- and 17-year-old tobacco workers whose labor was not addressed by tobacco company policies and whose work, although dangerous, goes on because the U.S. government abandoned its attempt to designate the work as “hazardous.”

Human Rights Watch interviewed 26 children, ages 16 and 17, who worked on tobacco farms in North Carolina in 2015 and found:

“Almost all of the children interviewed—25 out of 26—said they experienced sickness, pain, and discomfort while working. Most children interviewed experienced the sudden onset of at least one specific symptom consistent with acute nicotine poisoning while working in tobacco farming in 2015, or after returning home from working in tobacco fields, including nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, and lightheadedness.

Many children also reported either working in or near fields that were being sprayed with pesticides, or re-entering fields that had been sprayed very recently. A number of children reported immediate illness after coming into contact with pesticides.”

IV. Agriculture: Other types of farm work—Harvesting crops and using machinery

Despite perceptions that farms are safe, wholesome places for children, farms are actually quite dangerous workplaces. They are the most dangerous workplace that large numbers of children are allowed to work, beginning at age 12, because of lax child labor laws in the U.S.

According to the [National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety](#) (, about every three days a child dies in an agricultural-related incident, and every day about 38 children are injured on farms. About 80 percent of the nearly 8,000 injured youth in 2012 were not working when the injury occurred, notes the Children’s Center, which suggests that over 1,500 youth were working for wages when they were injured on the farm.

[According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\), in 2012](#) more than 955,400 youth lived on the 2.2 million farms in the U.S.; 49 percent of these youth worked on their farm. About 258,800 non-resident youth were hired in agriculture that year (an increase of over 28,000 youth workers from the prior year.)

Americans are reluctant to admit it, but farms are very dangerous. Agriculture is consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous industries in America. In its 2008 edition of *Injury Facts*, The National Safety Council (NSC) ranked it as ***the most dangerous industry*** with 28.7 deaths per 100,000 adult workers. The fatality rate among youth workers in 2009—21.3 per 100,000 fulltime employees—means it the most dangerous sector that youth under 18 are allowed to work in.

According to NIOSH data from 1995 to 2002, about 115 youth under 20 died on farms each year and about 15,876 farm related injuries occur to that age group. There is a glaring lack of recent fatality studies in agriculture. The Rural Mutual Insurance Company’s website has data that suggests there were 63 child deaths on farms in 2015.

A 2013 piece in *The Nation* titled ["Regulations are Killed, and Kids Die"](#) bemoaned the lack of data. In the words of reporter Mariya Strauss, "The experts I called were vexed by the lack of available data on farmworker children. 'The big story is, we don't have a surveillance system,'" says Amy Liebman, director of environmental and occupational health for the Salisbury, Maryland-based Migrant Clinicians Network. The CFI numbers give 'a general sort of idea,' she adds, but 'they really miss some of the hired teen workers.'"

Because of the type of mechanical equipment used on farms (augurs and other type of metal blades that spin) and machinery like tractors which are prone to tip over, farm accidents often produce disabling injuries and high rates of amputation. A Kansas State University (KSU) study in 2007, noted that farms produced more than 80,000 disabling injuries.

A [2006 study by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), found that nearly three in four deaths among working youth were caused by vehicles and machinery. The report authors found that young workers in agriculture were 3.6 times more likely to die than young workers in other sectors; a 15-year-old teen in crop production had six times the fatality rate of all 15-year-old workers. Despite these disturbing facts the nation's agricultural lobby has steadfastly opposed increased youth safety regulations on farms.

Agriculture's danger for teens is well documented. Between 1992 and 2000, more than four in 10 work-related fatalities of young workers occurred on farms. Half of the fatalities in agriculture involved youth under age 15. For workers 15 to 17, the risk of fatal injury is four times the risk for young workers in other workplaces, according to U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Examples of recent farm tragedies follow:

- Amos King, age 11, died in a farm accident in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania when a **1,200 pound bale of hay fell on him** in January 2016. Amos was a member of the Amish community. He died one day after an 8-year-old boy suffered very serious leg injuries when his leg became stuck in some farm machinery on a nearby farm.
- An unidentified Canadian boy, 10, was killed while **driving a forklift** in November 2015 near his family's farm near Killam, Alberta. The machine drove into a ditch and rolled over. In the U.S., forklifts are considered too dangerous for minors to drive, unless they are in agriculture when 16-year-olds are allowed to drive them. But, children working on their parents' farms are exempted from all safety laws.
- In May 2015, 9-year-old Charlotte Anne "Charlie" VanKempfen of Herman, Minnesota died in a **rock-picking incident**. She was apparently run over by a vehicle in a field as she cleared it of rocks that had been unearthed over the winter. Details of whether she was working for wages or working on a family farm were not provided in published news reports.
- In September 2014, Troy Gorr of Monroe, Wisconsin died while working on a farm when **the tractor he was operating overturned**.
- In July 2014, a 9-year-old Wisconsin boy died in a Grant County grain bin accident as he tried to loosen a stuck augur (it is not clear if he was working for wages.)

- That same month, a 17-year-old Greencastle, Indiana teen died after he was **crushed by a back-hoe** that he lost control of on a farm.
- In September 2013, a 17-year-old in Heidelberg Township Pennsylvania was killed when his leg became entangled in a corn baler and he was **pulled into the machine**. The boy died of multiple blunt force trauma.
- In August 2013, a boy, 9, was critically injured in Martic Township, Pennsylvania when he was **caught in a diesel-powered alfalfa crimper**.
- In July of 2013, near Pesotum, Illinois, 79 teens working in a corn field fell victim to fungicide poisoning as they were sprayed by drift from a plane treating an adjacent field. The teen workers were treated at local hospitals mostly for skin irritations.
- In July 2013, a 12-year-old Jamesport, Missouri youth was seriously injured when a tractor being driven by his 14-year-old brother drove over him after it hit a bump and knocked the younger youth off.
- That same month in Frankford, Missouri, Michael Steele, 15, was killed when he fell off a tractor and was run over by a trailer being pulled behind the tractor.
- In Fairfield, Iowa that month, 16-year-old Jordan Baker died when he was pinned under a tractor that rolled over.
- In June of 2013, 15-year-old Jacob Moore of Ridgeville, Iowa suffered serious but not life-threatening injuries when he was pinned under a tractor that had rolled over.
- In Minnesota in June 2013, an 11-year-old boy was injured in Bellevue Township when he was run over by a rock wagon driven by another juvenile. The boy was “picking rocks” from fields—a common farm activity.
- In November 2012, 14-year-old Henry Lap died when he became trapped under a disc being pulled by mules. He fell from the equipment’s platform and under a rig.
- In July 2012, Curvin Kropf, 15, was killed when working on a machine that cut corn stalks. The youth fell off of the machine and was run over.
- Kelsey Helen Graves, age 13, died in Fort Collins, Colorado in July 2012, when she was cleaning a filter on an irrigation system and was electrocuted. She was working on her family farm.
- In August 2011 in Kremlin, Oklahoma, two 17-year-olds, Bryce Gannon and Tyler Zander, lost their legs in a grain auger they became entrapped in.
- In July, 17-year-old Jordan Ross Momen of Inwood, Iowa was killed in a farm accident. Momen was working on a cattle shed door from inside a payloader bucket when the payloader, which was being operated by another worker, accidentally moved forward and crushed him against the header of the doorway.
- In Tampico, Illinois, in July, two 14-year-old girls, Jade Garza and Hannah Kendall, were electrocuted while working to remove tassels on corn after coming into contact with a field irrigator on a farm.
- In March 2011, two teens, Nicholas Bledsoe, 19, and Justin Eldridge, 18, were working at their after-school job at a farm in Okawville, Illinois when they were electrocuted as a pole they were carrying touched a power line, killing them both.
- In December 2010, a 16-year-old named John Warner was killed when his clothing became entangled in the shaft of a manure spreader in Arcanum, Ohio.

- In late August 2010 in Etna Green, Indiana, 13-year-old Wyman Miller, a member of an Amish community, was tending to some horse when he was apparently struck or crushed by the horses. He died of blunt force trauma.
- In July 2010, 14-year-old White Whitebread suffocated in a grain bin beside 19-year-old co-worker Alex Pacas, who had jumped in to try to save him. The accident occurred in Mount Carroll, Illinois.
- In July 2010 in Middleville, Michigan, 18-year-old Victor Perez and 17-year-old Francisco M. Martinez died after falling into a silo they were power washing.
- David Yenni, a 13-year-old was killed in a grain loading accident at a Petaluma, California mill in August 2009. The boy, who was working with his father, climbed on top of an open trailer for unknown reasons just as the father was emptying it into an underground storage tank. Somehow, he became trapped in the funneling material. Would-be rescuers were able to grab his arm but could not free him from the grain until it was too late.
- In May 2009, Cody Rigsby, a Colorado 17-year-old was working in a grain bin when he vanished. It took rescuers six hours to find his body.

While many farm deaths occur to the children of farmers on their parents' farms, the same dangers that imperil the sons and daughters of farmers hold some danger for hired farmworkers, although their rate of injury seems to be lower.

Loopholes in current child labor law allow children to work in agriculture at younger ages than children can work in other industries. It is legal in many states for a 12-year-old to work all day under the hot summer sun with tractors and pickup trucks dangerously criss-crossing the fields, but that same 12-year-old could not be hired to make copies in an air-conditioned office building. Because of the labor law exemptions, large numbers of 12- and 13-year-olds—usually the sons and daughters of migrant and seasonal farmworkers—can be found working in the fields in the United States.

Farmworker advocates believe that an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 youth under the age of 16 help harvest our nation's crops each year, and exemptions allow even younger kids to work legally on very small farms. Field investigations by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) and Human Rights Watch, who are both members of the Child Labor Coalition, have found 9- and 10-year-old children working in the fields under harsh conditions.

The National Consumers League and the Child Labor Coalition believe that the long hours of farm work for wages for children under 14 is dangerous for their health, education, and well-being, and should not be allowed. We support legislative efforts that would apply child labor age restrictions to all industries, including agriculture, although the legislation does exempt the sons and daughters of farmers working on their parents' farm.

On May 5, 2010, Human Rights Watch released "[Fields of Peril—Child Labor in U.S. Agriculture](#)," the results of a year-long investigation. The report details the arduous work and harsh conditions that many youths who work on farms are subjected to.

Exemptions in the law also allow teens working on farms to perform tasks deemed hazardous in other industries when they are only 16—as opposed to 18 for the other industries. For example, a worker must be 18 to drive a forklift at retail warehouse, but a 16-year-old is legally allowed to drive a forklift at an agricultural processing facility. NCL does not believe such exemptions are justified. Driving a forklift is a very dangerous activity and should not be undertaken by minors.

In agriculture, 16- and 17-year-olds are permitted to work inside fruit, forage, or grain storage units, which kill workers every year in suffocation accidents; they can also operate dangerous equipment like corn pickers, hay mowers, feed grinders, power post hole diggers, auger conveyors, and power saws. NCL and the Child Labor Coalition, which it coordinates, are working to eliminate unjustified exemptions to U.S. Department of Labor safety restrictions based on age.

Each year, about two dozen workers—including several youth—are killed in silos and grain storage facilities. Purdue University found that 51 men and boys became engulfed in grain facilities and 26 died. NCL believes these facilities are too dangerous for minors.

The U.S. Department of Labor has tried to prohibit work by minors when it proposed occupational child safety rules for farms in September 2011. Unfortunately, because of political pressure from many members of the farm community, DOL abandoned its attempt to increase hazardous work protections for agriculture. These common-sense protections would have targeted only the most dangerous farm jobs for children.

Cheryl Monen, who lives in the small northwestern Iowa community of Lester, is a mom who lost her son to one of the farm accidents we detailed in July 2011. She regrets the Obama Administration withdrawal.

"I feel so guilty about it now. I just had not put it together how terribly dangerous it was and the risks he was in," Monen told the *Associated Press*. "I really struggle with that. Now, I really wish I never suggested he get a job."

Despite the sobering data on the dangers of agriculture injuries and fatalities, things are slowly improving and [NIOSH notes that the rate of agricultural injuries among children declined by 56 percent between 1998 and 2009](#). We believe that the robust health and safety efforts within the agricultural community has played a significant part in this reduction.

V. Outside helper, landscaping, tree-trimming, groundskeeping, and lawn service

Landscaping and yard work is a frequent entry point into the job market for teenagers. However, the sharp implements and machinery used to do the work present dangers for teens. Often, young workers are left unsupervised for long periods of time. The work can be extremely dangerous.

Recall our the earlier example of Blake Bryant, a 14-year-old who fell 50 feet to his death.

These additional incidents highlight the dangers of outside work:

- In September 2015, Conner LaPointe, 18, of New Athens, Illinois was operating a **commercial mower that rolled into a pond** and trapped him beneath it, drowning him.
- Bradley Hogue, 19, was killed in July 2014 after **falling into an augur** in Lake Stevens, Washington as he blew bark onto a residential property. It was his second day on the job.
- In April 2012, a six-year-old, Jeffrey Bourgeois, was helping is father with his landscaping business in Salem, Connecticut. As he placed a branch into a wood chipper, he was **instantly pulled to his death**.
- In Fairfax, Virginia, in August 2010, 17-year-old Gregory Malsam was helping a neighbor trim trees when he came in contact with a 19,000-volt power line and was **electrocuted**. He suffered massive internal injuries and died instantly.
- In July 2010, 12-year-old Luke Hahn was performing landscaping work with his father at a Tree Farm in Bushkill Township, Pennsylvania when the boy backed a dump truck into the valve of an underground propane tank, creating **an explosion that killed him** and critically injured his father.
- In September 2010 in Rosenberg, Texas, 19-year-old Walter Barcenas was mowing grass near some railroad tracks when he was **struck and killed by a train**.
- In November 2009 in Poquoson, Virginia, Frank Anthony Gornik, 14, died instantly as he used a shovel to push debris into **a wood chipper** and the machine grabbed his shovel, pulling him in before he could release his grip. Virginia law prohibits anyone under 18 from using a wood chipper.

Landscaping, groundskeeping, and lawn service workers use hand tools such as shovels, rakes, saws, hedge and brush trimmers, and axes, as well as power lawnmowers, chain saws, snow blowers, and power shears. Some use equipment such as tractors and twin-axle vehicles. These jobs often involve working with pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals. Rollovers from tractors, ATVs, and movers are a risk. Tree limb cutting and lifting and carrying inappropriately heavy loads are another potential danger; so is handling chemicals, pesticides, and fuel. Contact with underground or overhead electrical cables presents electrocution dangers.

Under federal laws, minors who are age 16 and older may be employed in landscaping and operate power mowers, chain saws, wood chippers, and trimmers.

VI. Construction and height work

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics fatality records, construction and roofing are two of the ten most dangerous jobs in America. In 2014, 20.5 percent of all work fatalities—essentially one

in five—were in construction, accounting for 874 deaths. A construction worker is nearly three times as likely to die from a work accident as the average American worker.

The leading causes of death on construction sites are falls, electrocution, getting struck by object, and getting caught in-between (a broad category that include cave-ins, getting pulling into machinery, and getting hit by machinery.) These four causes accounted for nearly six in 10 deaths.

Young workers are especially at risk given their relative inexperience on work sites and commonplace dangers construction sites often pose. According to NIOSH in 2002, youth 15-17 working in construction had greater than seven times the risk for fatal injury as youth in other industries. In [a 2003 release](#), NIOSH noted that despite only employing 3 percent of youth workers, construction was the third leading cause of death for young workers—responsible for 14 percent of all occupational deaths to youth under 18.

Labor laws limit the work of 16-and 17-year-olds in construction, but we know from news reports that teens are doing hazardous work and getting hurt.

In June 2009, a 9-year-old Alabama boy at a construction site fell through a skylight and was seriously injured. Press reports did not reveal if the boy was actually working, but according to state inspectors his presence at a site at which minors are prohibited from working is considered evidence of employment under the law.

Other examples of recent construction deaths among teens can be found below:

- In August 2015, Daniel Potter, 18, of Front Royal, Virginia died in a Loudoun County quarry as he emptied mineral filler (used in asphalt) from a metal silo into a truck. The corroded silo suddenly burst apart burying the teen under the filler and metal pieces of the container.
- 16-year-old Tristin James Wood of Marquand, Missouri was killed in June 2014 after he was told to stand in a construction zone without a hard hat and was hit on the head by the boom of a crane. OSHA cited the employer for 13 serious safety violations.
- In July 2014, Chris Lawrence died at construction site near Calgary, Canada when he became entangled in a conveyor at a gravel crushing site. The boy was still in training.
- David “Drew” Kimberly was crushed to death on January 16, 2014 when a bridge panel weighing nearly 1,800 pounds fell on him as he was taking apart an old bridge in Lamont, Florida. It was his first week on the job.
- Thomas Harlan Jr., age 15, of Lucedale, Mississippi, was killed when his head was struck by a pole moving on a tram.
- A man removing trees from a construction site accidentally ran over his own son, 16-year-old Damon Spring in Celina, Ohio in August 2013.
- In November 2011, 18-year-old Maynro Perez died working on a construction site in Rock Hill, South Carolina in an accident that involved a backhoe.
- In August 2010 in Edgerton, Ohio, 18-year-old Keith J. LaFountain died of injuries from blunt force trauma when a wall fell over from high winds.

- That same month in Grand Island, Nebraska, 19-year-old Emilio DeLeon was electrocuted after coming in contact with power lines while working as a roofer. DeLeon was in the bucket of a crane when the lines were touched.
- In January 2010, Danilo Riccardi Jr. was trying to get water from a trench so that he could mix concrete when he fell into the large room-sized hole. A muddy mixture of sand and water soon trapped him like quicksand. By the time rescuers arrived, the boy was dead, submerged under the liquid mixture. It took almost three hours to dig his body out.
- A 15-year-old Lawrenceville, Georgia boy, Luis Montoya, performing demolition work in November 2008, fell down an empty escalator shaft 40 feet to his death. According to a spokesman for the Georgia Department of Labor, minors—defined in the state as being 15 years old—are not allowed to work on construction sites. The company that employed the boy, Demon Demo had been fined by OSHA in 2005 and 2008 because workers did not wear required safety harnesses to prevent falls. The fine in the second violation was reduced from a \$4,000 penalty to \$2,000. Montoya was not wearing a safety harness when he fell.
- Bendelson Ovalle Chavez, a 17-year-old resident of Lynn, Massachusetts, was fixing a church roof in September 2007 when he fell 20 feet to his death. Employed by the company two months earlier, he had received no training or information about how to prevent falls, according to a report by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health.
- In July 2007, James Whittemore, 17, died while taking down scaffolding at a construction project in Taunton, Massachusetts. The teen was helping his father remove the scaffolding when a pole he was holding fell against a high-voltage electrical wire and he was electrocuted. The boy died in his father's arms.

Roofing work is [generally prohibited for teens under 18](#).

Federal child labor law prohibits construction work for anyone less than 16 years of age, although youths 14 and 15 may work in offices for construction firms if they are away from the construction site.

Labor law regarding work at heights has some inconsistencies. Minors 16 years and older may work in heights, as long as it is not on or above a roof. They can work on a ladder, scaffold, in trees, and on structures like towers, silos, and bridges.

Your state may have a higher minimum age.

VII. Traveling youth crews performing door-to-door sales

“These schemes are nothing short of theft of the labor and the wages of hundreds, if not thousands, of young people.”

– [Robert Abrams](#), former Attorney General of New York

The startling discovery of the remains of a long-missing 18-year-old girl, Jennifer Hammond, in October 2009, served as a painful reminder that traveling door-to-door sales jobs are very dangerous. A Littleton, Colorado native, Hammond had last been seen in 2009 in a mobile home park in Milton, New York, where she had been dropped off to sell magazines door-to-door. She failed to show up at a designated pick-up spot two hours later. A hunter found her remains in a forest in Saratoga County, New York six years later.

Parents should not allow their children to take a traveling sales job. The dangers are too great. Without parental supervision, teens are at too great a risk of being victimized. Traveling sales crew workers are typically asked to go to the doors of strangers and sometimes enter their homes—a very dangerous thing for a young person to do.

Under pressure and scrutiny from advocacy groups and state law enforcement entities, it appears that the traveling sales sector today rarely hires individuals under 18. However, in recent years, there have been isolated reports of minors and more frequent reports of 18- to 21-year-olds being hired.

Numerous crime reports involving traveling sales crews suggests that the environment they present is not a safe one for teen workers or young adults.

In March 2011, two men in Spartanburg County, South Carolina called police and asked them to be taken to jail because incarceration seemed like it would be a better alternative than the traveling sales crew they were in. Vincent Mercento, 19, and Adam Bassi, 21, told police they needed to quit going door-to-door asking people to buy magazines. They said they were tired of being wet and selling magazines, and tired of the abuse from the company that employed them which seemed “cult-like.” Their lives were so bad they thought jail would be better.

How dangerous are traveling sales crews?

In August 2013, a 14-year-old teen selling chocolate door-to-door, in Hamilton, Ontario was sexually assaulted by his boss, according to police.

In March 2013, Zach Lossner, 17, a Tulsa, Oklahoma high school student, said two men who offered him a ride tried to recruit him into a traveling sales crew and would not let him go for

several hours. Lossner eventually escaped the kidnapping attempt.

In February 2011, Columbia County, Georgia authorities arrested a traveling sales crew of 17 individuals for peddling without a license. Five of the arrestees had criminal records, including one individual on probation for child molestation, another with a conviction for statutory rape, and a third for not registering as a sex offender. Would you want your son or daughter to travel in such company?

All 17 individuals were crowded into one van. With vehicular accidents being one of the most common causes of death for young people, NCL urges teens not to accept any job like those on a traveling sales crew that involves driving long distances or for long periods of time.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) warned consumers in May 2009 that deceptive sales practices are common in door-to-door sales—the group had received 1,100 complaints in the prior year. “Experience tells us that customers aren’t the only victims of [these scams],” said Michael Coil, President of the BBB of Northern Indiana, “the young salespeople are also potentially being taken advantage of by their employers and forced to work long hours, endure substandard living conditions and have their wages withheld from them.”

Unfortunately, young salespeople are also vulnerable to violence by crew leaders. The *New York Times* reported in October 2009, that “two young people working as itinerant magazine salesmen” in Lakewood, Washington **were beaten with baseball bats and golf clubs** after they told their bosses they wanted to quit. The victims, whose names and ages were not identified in the article, were hospitalized and their six assailants were arrested.

"The industry's out of control as far as violence," said Earline Williams, the founder of Parent Watch, one of the groups that follows the industry, told the *Orlando Sentinel* in a December 2009 article that reported the beating of Brian Emery, a sales crew member called “The Kid” by his colleagues. Emery’s age was not reported. New to traveling sales, Emery told deputies that his team members gave him \$12 to buy beer in Osceola County, Florida, but became enraged when he bought the wrong brand. Two men were charged with beating Emery, one of whom broke a beer bottle across his face.

In May 2008, police in Spokane, Washington investigated a 16-year-old’s claim that she was held as a captive worker by a door-to-door sales company. She eventually escaped but only after the sales crew leaders beat up her boyfriend because he wasn’t selling enough magazines.

Many youth desperate for work are lured in with promises that they will earn good money, travel the country, and meet fun people selling door-to-door. One young man was told that the experience would be like MTV’s *Road Rules*.

The reality is often far different. Many salesmen work six days a week and 10 to 14 hours a day. Unscrupulous traveling sales companies charge young workers for expenses like rent and food, essentially requiring them to turn over all the money they ostensibly make from selling magazines or goods. When workers try to quit or leave the crew, they are told they cannot.

Disreputable companies have been known to seize young workers' money, phone cards, and IDs, and restrict their ability to call their parents. Drug use and underage drinking are not uncommon.

A *New York Times* report in 2007 found that crew members often make little money after expenses are deducted. On some crews, the lowest sellers are forced to fight each other or are punished by being forced to sleep on the floor.

Few of the magazine sales teams do background checks on their workers, according to Phil Ellenbecker, who runs an industry watchdog group based in Wisconsin that has tracked hundreds of felony crimes and over 80 deaths attributed to door-to-door vendors. "It's not uncommon to get recently released felons knocking on your door trying to sell you magazines," said Ellenbecker.

One salesman who spent 10 years on traveling sales crews and eventually became a crew manager told the *Indiana Student Daily* newspaper, "I regret a lot of stuff I did.... I'd become this monster. Lying to kids, telling them how good the job was, and it wasn't a good job at all."

A tough economy has made it tougher to sell magazines and according to Earline Williams of Parent Watch, that has meant more violence on crews and more sales employees abandoned. "It's gotten meaner," she told NCL.

Among the possible dangers of working on traveling sales crews:

Murder

In addition to the suspected murder of Jennifer Hammond in 2003, other relatively recent murders:

- In November 2007, Tracie Anaya Jones, 19, who was a member of a traveling sales crew, was found dead from stab wounds. Originally from Oregon, Jones was last seen working in Little Rock Arkansas before her body was found 150 miles away in Memphis, Tennessee. Her killing remains unsolved and was featured on the *America's Most Wanted* website.
- In Rapid City, South Dakota in April 2004, a 41-year-old man was charged with murdering a 21-year-old woman who came to his home to sell magazines.

Robbery

Working in unknown neighborhoods poses risks, especially if you are carrying money from sales or have goods to sell.

- Although she was not part of a traveling sales crew, a 12-year-old selling candy for a school fundraiser in a Jacksonville, Florida neighborhood in March 2009 was robbed by three individuals who drove up to her in a car.
- In April 2003, a 16-year-old Texas youth selling candy was robbed and shot in the stomach by two teens.

Assaults

- In March 2011, an 18-year-old woman selling magazines in the Myrtle Grove, North Carolina area was approached by a man driving in a truck who assaulted her. Police arrested the man.
- In May 2009 in Bethesda, Maryland, a 19-year-old woman selling magazines was attacked and nearly raped by someone she encountered while selling magazines door-to-door.
- In Lawton, Oklahoma, a 19-year-old Nevada woman was selling magazines door-to-door in February 2009 when her potential customer invited her in. The man gave her something to drink and she awoke several hours later and realized she had been raped.
- A 19-year-old Ohio magazine salesperson was assaulted by three men who expressed an interest in buying magazines. The victim was waiting for a pickup by co-workers when she was approached, abducted, and sexually assaulted in April 2003.

Consumers are also at-risk of the dangers associated with traveling sales. Traveling sales crew members have committed a number of assaults and other crimes against non-sales crew members:

- In May 2011, Ruben Barradas, a door-to-door salesman was sentenced by a judge in Omaha, Nebraska to five to eight years in prison for convincing a woman that she and her 7- and 10-year-old daughters should submit to sexual examinations.
- A Texas man, Jesse Estep, who worked in a magazine sales crew, was convicted of sexually assaulting a teenage girl in Litchfield, Connecticut in May 2010.
- In April 2010, police in Oak Ridge, Tennessee arrested a sex offender for possession of crack cocaine and other drugs.
- In February 2011, a Texas man from a traveling crew was arrested in Florida for sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl.

The Portland, Oregon police department has [online tips](#) for consumers regarding how to avoid becoming a victim of unscrupulous traveling sales crews.

Reckless driving

Traveling sales crews face greater risk of vehicle accidents and in many cases, crew leaders are driving without licenses or driving on suspended licenses. Vehicles are not always maintained properly and the use of 15-passenger vans in some cases presents safety concerns.

- In June 2011, a van carrying a traveling magazine sales crew rolled over in American Falls, Idaho. Three crew members aged 20 to 22 died. Seven others aged 18 to 24 were hospitalized.
- In November 2005, two teenagers were killed and seven were injured when their van flipped near Phoenix, Arizona. The vehicle crossed a median strip and ended up in the opposite lanes of a freeway. All nine occupants, who worked for a magazine subscription company, were thrown from the vehicle.

- A month earlier, 20-year-old, James Crawford, was ejected from a van and killed in Georgia. Eighteen young adults were crammed into the 15-passenger van. The driver fell asleep and was allegedly driving under the influence of marijuana. The occupants were heading north from Florida to sell magazine subscriptions.
- Two young salespersons, age 18 and 19, were ejected from a vehicle and pronounced dead at the scene after a vehicle accident in which 15 salespersons were crammed into a 10-year-old SUV that rolled over on a highway in New Mexico in September 2002.
- In 1999, seven individuals traveling as a sales crew were killed in an accident in Janesville, Wisconsin. Five other passengers were injured, including one girl who was paralyzed. The driver of the van, who was trying to elude a police chase, did not have a valid driver's license and attempted to switch places with another driver when the accident occurred. The fatality victims included Malinda Turvey, 18, who has inspired ground-breaking legislation—Malinda's Act—which passed in Wisconsin in April 2009 to regulate traveling sales crews

One young man who was abandoned by his traveling crew told NCL about some of the driving dangers, which included unsafe vans and unsafe drivers: "You've got drivers that have licenses but they're suspended. They shouldn't be driving [and] they let young adults drive under the influence."

Alcohol and drugs

Here is an excerpt from "Shauna's Story," a memoir of life on the road with a traveling sales crew, which appears at www.Travelingsalescrews.info, a watchdog site for the industry):

"[We were] a whole group of 18 and 19 year olds, and every night we drank more alcohol, and smoked more weed than the wildest college kids. It was the way we relaxed after some of the days we went through. We were out there rain, sleet, or snow all day, just like little soldiers. From the scorching summer days in Alabama to the near freezing temperatures of New York winters. We had only one mission: bring back the money and that we did. And for all that we went through, dealing with [the crew leaders] screaming at us when we didn't have many sales, to refusing to take us to eat if we didn't have any sales. To people slamming doors in our faces all day. We felt like we deserved to escape for a little while. And since we weren't allowed to have our own vehicles on the road, we were stuck at the hotel. So every night after work, we would walk to the nearest store, find the closest dope man, and escape for a couple hours."

Desertion

Young salesmen have been stranded if they try to quit or do not sell enough.

Parent Watch's founder Williams told the *Orlando Sentinel* in 2009 that she handles two to six phone calls a day from frightened, stranded workers seeking bus fare home.

In the summer of 2009, the National Consumers League received a call from one stranded salesman, Ricky, who had been left on the side of the road a thousand miles from home with no money to pay for transportation.

An April 2015 piece titled “Trapped into Selling Magazines Door-to-Door” in *The Atlantic* quotes a salesperson, Stephanie Dobbs: “I’ve been working on crews for three years, and I’ve been abandoned 11 times.”

Exposure

Crews often work in bad weather, walking miles in blazing heat or in cold weather. They often wait hours in strange neighborhoods for their crew leaders or drivers to take them back to the hotels they are staying in.

Arrest

Crews often operate without proper licenses and permits and young sales people are subject to arrest.

Sexual exploitation

Young workers, far from home, are at special risk of exploitation from older crew leaders and crew members—many of whom have criminal records.

Parent Watch estimates that as many as 30,000 to 40,000 individuals are involved in traveling sales crews, selling magazines, candy, household cleaners, and other items door-to-door each year. It’s difficult to estimate the number of minors involved in this industry. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most recruits are over 18 because of the legal risks of transporting minors.

However, NCL worries that there are still occasional minors lured into the business. In April 2011 in Manhattan, Kansas a 17-year-old was one of five magazine crew members arrested for peddling without a license. In August 2010, police arrested eight individuals for illegal sales in Holden, Massachusetts. Two of the individuals were 17.

- In Gainesville, Florida in November 2009, police responded to a disturbance involving a 17-year-old girl who had been fired from a crew for low sales. The girl said she had nowhere to go and was not allowed to collect her belongings until police helped her. Police ran background checks on the crew of 50 sales people she was traveling with and found many with extensive criminal histories.

While this report focuses on protecting teenagers, traveling sales crews present significant dangers for young adults—large numbers of 18- to 24-year-olds who make up most crews—as well.

- A news report from Mankato, Minnesota concerned an 18-year-old man with developmental delays who was lured into following a sales crew. His panicked family was able to retrieve him about a week later. Another 18-year-old who suffered from schizophrenia and manic depression was lured from his home in Gaston County, North Carolina in April 2011.

The website Parentwatch.org contains an account by an 18-year-old traveling sales crew member who said she was drugged, raped, and impregnated by a fellow crew member. She also said she regularly saw fellow crew members get beaten to the point that they needed hospitalization.

The number of crimes in which 18- to 21-year-olds in traveling sales crews are victims or perpetrators is staggering and can be tracked [here](#).

Shauna, the young woman who wrote about her experiences in a crew, reflected:

“It’s crazy the things people will put up with to feel like they belong, to feel loved, and to be accepted....Now that I have been off the road ...it’s given me the opportunity to sit back and reflect on just how blessed I was to be involved in something so dangerous for so long, and make it out safely. Sometimes I still have nightmares of some of the things that I went through, and some of the things I witnessed.”

What can be done to help clean up this industry?

States and localities should consider model laws like the one passed in Wisconsin in 2009. It requires sales workers who travel in pairs of two or more to be employees rather than independent contractors and subjects them to labor laws. Companies that employ crews would have to register with the state and their operators would have to pass criminal background checks. The law requires companies to tell recruits in writing where they will work and how much they will be paid. It also requires them to carry insurance and mandates employers to pay a \$10,000 bond with the state.

Local police can ensure that crews in their areas are properly licensed and can talk to young salespeople to ensure that they are not being physically abused or held against their will.

In July 2015, the anti-trafficking group [Polaris Project](#) released a research report on the subject of traveling sales crews.

[“Knocking at Your Door: Labor Trafficking on Traveling Sales Crews”](#) provides an in-depth analysis of the factors that allow this crime to persist and encourages greater understanding of the extensive abuses within the industry. The report makes several recommendations, including:

- Congress should amend the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in order to cover door-to-door sales,
- The Federal Government should investigate abuses of the J-1 visa program,
- Law enforcement should pursue bad actors at the top of the sales network instead of focusing on crew members violating local anti-solicitation laws,
- Service organizations should recognize crew members as victims of labor trafficking so they can receive support,
- The publishing industry should ensure transparent business supply chains in their magazine sales, and
- Consumers should use caution when buying magazines or other items from sales crews.

Additional recommendations can be found in the report.

VIII. How are teens dying and getting injured at work?

Transportation accidents, broadly defined to include almost any moving vehicle, killed 19 of the 22 teens under 18 in the latest BLS Fatal Occupational Injuries report covering 2014. All eight of the youth workers who died under 16 in 2014 died in transportation accidents. One of these accidents involved transportation by horses, one involved a boat, three were on roadways, and three were off roadways.

Of the 14 deaths of teenagers aged 16- and 17 years old, 11 were in transportation accidents. Five of these were roadway accidents, three were non-roadway accidents, and one was in a boat. In this age group, one teen died by fire or ignition of vapors/gases.

Oddly, the percentage of transportation accidents that killed 18- and 19-year-old workers was much lower—only half (killing 21 of 42.) “Contact with objects and equipment” (mostly being struck) killed nine of the remaining 21 and “exposure to harmful substances or environments” killed seven. It is important to note this data does not include farm children who die while doing non-paid work on farms for their parents.

Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to accidents both in normal life and at work. Accidents are the leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 19. In fact, more youth between 10 and 19 die from injuries than die from all other causes combined.

Teen workers are killed in a shocking variety of ways:

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics for **all** (including adult) workers suggests that male workers are much more at risk than female. In 2012, 92 percent of the workers in America who died in the job were men—only 8 percent were women. Among all worker fatalities:

- One in seven deaths were from falls;
- One in six deaths from “contact with objects and equipment;”
- Four in 10 were caused by transportation accidents;

Women were more than three times as likely to be murdered on the job as men (one in 12 women who die at work are murdered.)

Injuries:

[The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) estimates that for the 10-year period ending in 2007, an annual average of 795,000 young workers (defined as under 25) were treated in hospitals for work injuries—that comes out to nearly 2,200 young workers a day.

Young workers under 25 are **twice as likely** as older workers to experience a non-fatal, work-related injury.

[Survey results](#) published in the *American Journal of Health Behavior* in 2006 found that of 6,810 teens polled, more than half worked and 514 (or 7.5 percent) suffered injuries that caused them to miss three or more days of work.

Safety training and safety awareness could have prevented many of the deaths discussed in this report. The Teens at Work Injury Surveillance System of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health survey teen injured in Massachusetts between 2005 and 2009 found that 51 percent received no safety training. Nearly one in five of the teens worked without a supervisor on site at the time of the injury and nearly six in 10 (58 percent) thought their injury was preventable.

Causes of injuries

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the causes of workplace injuries typically fall into these seven categories:

1. Unsafe equipment;
2. Stressful conditions;
3. Inadequate safety training;
4. Inadequate supervision;
5. Dangerous work that is illegal or inappropriate for youth;
6. Trying to hurry; and
7. Alcohol and drug use.

Before discussing specific hazards associated with our five most dangerous jobs, NCL warns of work dangers that affect a wide range of teen workers.

IX. Other work hazards to be aware of

In addition to NCL's Five Most Dangerous Jobs, we'd like to highlight some additional jobs that teen workers should regard with caution.

A. Driver/operator, forklifts, tractors, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)

Forklifts, tractors, and all-terrain vehicles (ATV) pose dangers for many young workers. NCL has seen a large number of children injured in ATV accidents in the last several months (whether these are recreational accidents or work-related is often hard to determine from news reports.)

Several youth tractor accidents have been detailed in our section on agricultural fatalities and injuries. Some examples of forklift and vehicle accidents involving youth:

- On May 11, 2009, Miguel Herrera-Soltera drove a forklift up a ramp when it tipped over. The boy fell out of the forklift which landed on top of him. Fellow workers used another forklift to extricate the boy but he died at the hospital.
- Nathan Lundin, 12, died in Gifford, Indiana in March 2009, when he was struck by an object falling off a moving forklift at his family's business, Upright Iron Works, Inc.
- In March 2008, a 15-year-old boy suffered a serious leg injury in a Portland, Oregon wrecking lot when a 17-year-old co-worker operating a front loader knocked over a stack of cars and part of a concrete wall collapsed onto the younger boy. No one under 18 is allowed to work in an auto wrecking area, or operate a front loader, according to *The Oregonian* newspaper.
- John Sanford, 18, a forklift operator in Toledo mistakenly thought he put his forklift in park. The machine was in neutral and when Sanford walked in front of it, he was pinned between a trash receptacle and the lift and killed in December 2007.

Each year, nearly 100 workers are killed in forklift accidents. Another 20,000 workers are seriously injured in forklift-related accidents. Many of these injuries occur when workers are run over, struck by, or pinned by a forklift.

U.S. child labor law mandates an age of 18 to operate a forklift unless the forklift is being operated on an agricultural facility—then youth may operate the forklift at age 16. Advocates can think of no rationale for this different safety standard and are pressuring the federal government to raise the age to 18 for all operators.

Tractor-related incidents are the most common type of agricultural fatality in the United States. Increasingly, tractors are being used in non-agricultural industries, like construction, manufacturing, and landscaping. Tractor overturns are the most common cause of tractor fatalities, and was the primary cause among youth workers.

ATVs resulted in 44,700 serious injuries of youth under 16. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported that in 2004, 130 children under the age of 16 died in ATV accidents. The *Associated Press* reported that more than 100 kids died in 2006, although clearly the majority of the fatalities were in non-work-related accidents.

According to research out of the University of Sydney, in Australia, where ATV deaths are also relatively common, nearly half of ATV deaths are from rollovers. And rollover deaths were much more common in farm accidents than in non-farm accidents. The study recommends that protective devices be added to ATVs and that alternative, safer vehicles be used in many situations.

In a June 3, 2012 report about an Oklahoman teen who suffered a traumatic brain injury and a broken arm in a recreational ATV accident, his mother said, “Kids get on [ATVs] and think they can drive really fast and nothing is going to happen to them, but it does.” In 2011, the Trauma

One Center at Oklahoma University's Medical Center treated 117 victims of ATV accidents—over half (51 percent) were under 18.

ATVsafety.gov notes that it is very important that a child under 16 never be allowed to operate an adult-sized ATV.

B. Restaurants, grocery stores, and retail stores

In terms of raw numbers, retail establishments, restaurants, and grocery stores are three of the largest employers of teen workers.

According to 2009 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 44 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds work in the “leisure/hospitality” sector, mostly in restaurants and other food service. Nearly one in four (24 percent) work in retail jobs. Not surprisingly, a lot of teen occupational injuries occur in those two sectors. Nationally, nearly half of teenagers injured on the job work in restaurants or other “leisure/hospitality” companies. Three in 10 work in retail establishments.

The Massachusetts teen worker survey mentioned previously found similar results: among the accommodation and food service sector and the retail trade sector accounted for 58 percent of the workers' compensation lost wages claims because of injuries.

In a 2007 article in *Pediatrics* by Carol Runyan, et al., based on a phone survey of 14- to 18-year-olds employed in the retail and service sectors found that “despite federal regulations prohibiting teens under 18 from using certain types of dangerous equipment (*e.g.*, slicers, dough mixers, box crushers, paper balers) or serving or selling alcohol in places where it is consumed, 52 percent of males and 43 percent of females reported having performed [more than one] prohibited task.”

Many teens work in restaurants are at risk of burns and other kitchen-related injuries. In some states, restaurants rank first in the number of youth work injuries, although the injuries are often less severe than in many of the occupations cited in this report. Fryers, meat slicers, knives, compactors, and wet, greasy floors can all combine to form a dangerous work environment.

At times, teenagers work in what is typically a safe environment, but perform unsafe tasks. For example, grocery stores employ a lot of teen workers and, for the most part, they provide a safe work environment. However, when workers are rushing or are improperly trained, accidents can happen.

Workers under 18 are allowed to *load* trash compactors—found in most grocery stores—but they are prohibited from *operating* them because of a number of gruesome accidents that have occurred to users in the past. Safety specialists worry that improperly trained youth will not obey the law. Similarly, minors—unless they are working in agriculture—are not allowed to drive a forklift, but young people will sometimes get behind the wheel anyway.

In 2009, a woman who was barely 18, working in a grocery in Indiana, lost her hand trying to clean a grinder in a grocery store.

Retail stores may seem like a safe environment, but teens can get hurt lifting boxes, cutting boxes open, crushing boxes, and falling from ladders.

Mall and grocery parking lots are often the site of car accidents and can also be dangerous for young workers.

Nearly all workplaces hold some danger. NCL's goal is not to instill teen workers with fear but to get them and employers to minimize the risks involved with some jobs by recognizing known hazards.

C. Meatpacking

In addition to the five most dangerous jobs that teens are legally allowed to perform, NCL warns working youth to avoid meatpacking jobs. Although workers are supposed to be 18 to work in these plants, federal immigration raids in plants in Iowa and South Carolina in 2008 found children as young as 13 and 14 working.

In the spring of 2010, the trial involving child labor allegations at the Agriprocessors plant in Postville, Iowa revealed harsh conditions endured by working teens—the youngest of which was 13. One teen said he was pushed to process 90 chickens per minute with electric shears. Another Postville teen said that industrial cleaners made her skin peel. Another worker said that when he was 16, he worked 12-hour days, six days a week.

Meat processing work is very dangerous, requiring thousands of cutting motions a day with sharp knives. In a visit to Postville in the summer of 2008, NCL staff interviewed a young worker who cut himself while processing meat when he was only 16 years old. One teen said that industrial cleaners caused her skin to peel.

One of the examples we provided in our forklift section involved a 17-year-old who was killed in a forklift accident in a meatpacking plant.

In addition to being dangerous, the work is messy, bloody, exhausting and too demanding for teens. NCL asks employers and federal and state labor investigators to make sure that no youth under the age of 18 are working in meat processing.

D. Lumber mills and lumber yards

A study in the [American Journal of Health and Behavior](#) noted that that 51 percent of surveyed teens who had worked in lumber mills had been injured. Four in 10 teens who worked in lumber

yards had also been injured. These workplaces did not make our top five list because it is believed that small numbers of teens are employed in lumber yards and lumber mills.

E. Deaths from driving

The most common way for a teen worker to die is in a traffic accident. In 2010, 32,708 Americans—about 90 a day—died in car accidents. Fifteen of the 34 youth workers under 18 who died in 2010—44 percent—perished in motor vehicle accidents.

In July 2010 in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, 16-year-old Troy Don Kimbley was killed when the tow truck he was driving overturned on a curve and flipped two and a half times before coming to rest on its top.

NCL encourages young workers to look for jobs in which they do not drive, are not regularly driven by others, or are not driven great distances.

When in a car, young workers should always wear their seat belt.

They should also demand that their driver focus on their driving and not be distracted by using cell phones, eating, or other disruptions. They should insist that the driver obey traffic laws and drive at safe speeds.

According to several studies, the perception that driving in rural areas is safe is very misleading. Rural crashes are more frequent and more severe on a per capita or per mile basis. One report estimated that some rural counties are 100 times more dangerous than typical urban counties.

F. Workplace violence

According to findings from the 2013 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, violence accounted for one out of every six fatal work injuries in 2013. Between 1992 and 2012, over 700 homicides a year occurred in workplaces.

Restaurants and retail establishments hold elevated risks of workplace violence. According to 2010 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, three of the 34 youth workers who died that year succumbed to assaults or violent acts. If you include 18- and 19-year-olds, 15 of the 90 workers between the ages of 16 and 19 who died at work in 2010 perished from violent acts.

- In March 2016, a man eating in a Church's Chicken restaurant in Philadelphia became enraged, left, and returned a short time later with a gun and shot a 19-year-old worker three times.
- 19-year-old Peter Meilke was gunned down while working in a pizza place in Bellaire, Texas in February 2016. Police said that Meilke appeared to comply with the robbers demands but they shot him anyway.

- In April 2012, a 16-year-old, Mokbel Mohamed "Sam" Almujaanhi, in Farmville, North Carolina was shot to death during [the robbery of a convenience store](#). Almujaanhi worked for his father who owned the store, where two other men were also murdered by the robbers.
- In January 2010, an Illinois teenager was beaten and sexually assaulted after being abducted from the sandwich shop where she worked alone at night. In some inner cities, young fast-food workers have reported routinely having to deal with gang members who come in to harass and rob them.
- In June 2011, 17-year-old pharmacy clerk Jennifer Meija was shot and killed alongside three other employees inside the Medford, New York pharmacy where she worked. Meija was just days from her high school graduation. Police reports said that the suspect in the shooting was trying to steal prescription drugs.

A 2009 survey conducted by Dr. Kimberly Rauscher of the Injury Prevention Research Center at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill)—a member of the Child Labor Coalition—found that 10 percent of high school students surveyed had been physically attacked, another 10 percent had experienced sexual harassment, and one in four said they had been threatened while at work.

Given the dangers associated with working at night, **NCL believes that teen workers should not be asked to work alone at night**. Employers should discuss security procedures with employees in detail. The Illinois teen who was abducted had become aware that a suspicious person was watching her but did not call the police. She texted her concerns to her boyfriend, who rushed to the workplace. He arrived too late to prevent the abduction.

States that are considering weakening their child labor laws by allowing youth to work past 10 p.m. should be dissuaded by the additional risk of workplace violence these young workers will be exposed to.

I. Tips for staying safe at work

Tips for parents, employers, and teens:

While work plays an important role in the development of teenagers, teens and parents should carefully think about prospective jobs that teens are considering and assess possible workplace dangers that those jobs might possess.

Tips for teen workers

NCL urges teens to say “no” to jobs that involve:

- Door-to-door sales, especially out of the youth's neighborhood;
- Long-distance traveling away from parental supervision;
- Extensive driving or being driven;
- Driving forklifts, tractors, and other potentially dangerous vehicles;
- The use of dangerous machinery;
- The use of chemicals;
- Working in grain storage facilities; and
- Work on ladders or work that involves heights where there is a risk of falling.

Know the legal limits

To protect young workers like you, state and federal laws limit the hours you can work and the kinds of work you can do. For state and federal child labor laws, visit [Youth Rules](#).

Play it safe

Always follow safety training. Working safely and carefully may slow you down, but ignoring safe work procedures is a fast track to injury. There are hazards in every workplace and recognizing and dealing with them correctly may save your life.

Ask questions

Ask for workplace training—like how to deal with irate customers or how to perform a new task or use a new machine. Tell your supervisor, parent, or other adult if you feel threatened, harassed, or endangered at work.

Make sure the job fits

If you can only work certain days or hours, if you don't want to work alone, or if there are certain tasks you don't want to perform, make sure your employer understands and agrees before you accept the job.

Don't flirt with danger

Be aware of your environment at all times. It's easy to get careless after a while when your tasks have become predictable and routine. But remember, you're not indestructible. Injuries often occur when employees are careless or goofing off.

Trust your instincts

Following directions and having respect for supervisors are key to building a great work ethic. However, if someone asks you to do something that feels unsafe or makes you uncomfortable, don't do it. Many young workers are injured—or worse—doing work that their boss asked them to do.

One safety expert suggests that if a job requires safety equipment other than a hard hat, goggles, or gloves, it's not appropriate for minors.

The CDC has advised NCL that whenever machinery is located in the workplace, youth workers need to exercise extra caution.

What can parents do to help?

We ask parents to be involved in their teen's job hunting and decision making, helping them to select safe employment. An important first step in the process is for parents and teens to acquaint themselves with the laws that protect working teens. Read what a teen worker can and cannot do at www.youthrules.dol.gov. This U.S. Department of Labor site provides information for young workers in each of the fifty states.

Be involved

Before the job search begins, make decisions with your teen about appropriate employment. Set limits on how many hours per week he or she may work. Make sure your child knows you are interested in his or her part-time job and are worried about their safety.

Check it out

Meet your teen's supervisor, request a tour of the facilities, and inquire about the company's safety record. Ask about safety training, duties, and equipment. Don't assume the job is safe. Every workplace has hazards.

Talk, talk, talk—and listen, too

Ask questions about your teen's job. Ask teachers to give you a heads-up if grades begin to slip. Frequently ask your teen what she or he did at work and discuss any problems or concerns.

Watch for signs

Is the job taking a toll on your teen emotionally or physically? If it is an afterschool job or a weekend job when school is in session, assess your child's performance at school. If there's a loss of interest in or energy for school or social activities, the job may be too demanding. Ample research suggests grades suffer and dropout rates increase when teens work more than 20 hours per week.

Ten questions for parents to ask their child or their child's new employer:

- 1) Will my son or daughter be asked to drive a vehicle?
- 2) Will the job involve their being driven by others?
- 3) Is the commute to the work site lengthy?
- 4) Is there any machinery or tools that my child might be asked to use that may be dangerous?
- 5) Will he or she receive safety training?
- 6) How detailed is that training?
- 7) Is there any risk of falling involved with the job?
- 8) Will my child ever be on the job site alone?
- 9) Have my child and I visited www.youthrules.dol.gov to review state and federal law to make sure that we know what restrictions apply to their employment?
- 10) Is my child's job impacting my son's or daughter's physical or emotional health or their education negatively?

Working teens must be empowered to say, “I’m sorry, I don’t feel safe doing that.”

I. Recommendations to Protect Children at Work

What can employers do?

Employers must comply with child labor laws, provide safety training to young workers, follow all mandates safety regulations, and be vigilant about providing a safe workplace and all required safety equipment. They need to encourage open dialogue about safety with young workers who might be too shy to raise concerns.

Efforts in the area of enhanced safety not only save lives, they also save companies’ bottom line. The journal [*Pediatrics*](#) estimates that farm injuries cost farmers \$1.4 billion a year. According to Katherine Harmon, an editor at *Scientific American*, [a recent study also found that companies that had just one safety inspection saved 26 percent on worker compensation claims](#) on average. The average amount saved per company over a five-year period: \$355,000.

What can the federal and state governments do?

The U.S. Department of Labor and state agencies must enforce the laws and conduct regular reviews to ensure that new workplace hazards are dealt with. Hazardous Orders updates need to be conducted in a timely fashion. DOL should reconsider its ill-advised decision not to reintroduce occupational protections for children in agriculture during the Obama Administration. Companies that repeatedly violate child labor laws should not have their fines reduced.

We call on President Obama to break his unfathomable promise to the agricultural lobby to never update protections for children working in agriculture.

The U.S. Department of Labor also needs to publicize its work to enforce the nation’s child labor laws—something it has backed off from in recent years.

States should resist efforts by reactionary forces to rollback child labor protections.

The President should also send the message that the U.S. respects the human rights of children by sending the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) to the U.S. Senate so that it can be ratified. Today, the U.S. is the only nation that has not ratified this important child rights treaty.

What can Congress do?

Existing inequities in child labor policy such as allowing agricultural workers to perform hazardous jobs at younger ages should also be remedied. Congress should act to raise the age at which children can work for wages in agriculture to the standard of other industries. Children

under 14 who are not working on their parents' farm should be prohibited from working in the fields and the Secretary of Labor should determine what agricultural tasks can safely be done by 14- and 15-year-olds.

These protections are embodied in the Children's Act for Responsible Employment (CARE Act), legislation that will be introduced by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) in every legislative session. This legislation has been endorsed by over 100 national and regional organizations, including 20 farmworker organizations in the past and has had in some sessions more than 100 House cosponsors. Sadly, congressional leaders have refused to move the bill and protect America's most vulnerable workers.

We also hope that Congress will advance the two child labor bills banning child labor in tobacco workers previously mentioned.

It's imperative that OSHA be given more resources. In May 2016, authors Rebecca Reindel and M.K. Fletcher of the AFL-CIO, published "OSHA Faced with Diminishing Resources in Their Efforts to keep Working People Alive," which noted:

"Since its inception, OSHA resources have declined: federal OSHA has 300 fewer inspectors than in 1975, even though employment has nearly doubled. It would now take federal OSHA 145 years to inspect each workplace, compared with 84 years in 1992. Without inspections, there is no oversight for workplace conditions and no accountability for employers who violate the law.

Funding for workplace safety and health takes low priority. The U.S. government spends less than \$4 protecting each worker from safety and health hazards on the job. OSHA's measly budget of \$553 million is constantly under attack, yet the federal government spends [nearly \\$3 billion](#) per year to protect fish and wildlife; [\\$8 billion](#) to protect the environment; [\\$156 billion](#) to make sure the food we eat is safe; and [\\$585 billion](#) on national defense."

XIII. Conclusion

One hundred years ago, 100 workers died each day in America. Today, that number—with a U.S. population 3.5 times greater—is 13. While the loss of many manufacturing and farm jobs explains some of this drop, it doesn't explain it all. Safety training, education, and regulation works.

Teen workplace fatality rates have also been dropping over time thanks to the efforts of working teens, parents, employers, advocacy groups, and state and federal authorities. Twenty years ago, three times as many teens died at work as they do now.

Teen work deaths are preventable. Avoiding the most dangerous jobs is a starting point, and empowering beginning workers to recognize and avoid dangerous situations is also critical. “I don’t feel safe doing that” is a sentence that every parent should rehearse with their teen before they start a new job.

With vigilance, we can continue to reduce the number of children and teens killed in the workplace.

A final note to the families of victims of workplace fatalities and injuries:

We work with family members of victims of workplace accidents to educate the public so that similar tragedies do not occur. We use the names of victims and specific details of the accidents for the same reason. If you believe that sharing the story of your family member may prevent other accidents, please contact us at reidm@nclnet.org.

NCL’s Five Most Dangerous Jobs for Teens is updated annually using data from NIOSH, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CDC, and other sources. The report’s author is Reid Maki, NCL’s director of child labor advocacy and the coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition. Maki may be reached at reidm@nclnet.org.

Addendum 1- Additional recent deaths of teen workers:

- In July 2015, 14-year-old Martha Hochstetler was loading straw bales onto an elevator with her Amish family when her dress caught in the machinery. Her family tried to stop the machine but could not do it in time and the young girl died on the scene.
- In January 2015, 18-year-old Omar Booker was **killed in an apparent robbery** attempt at a Philadelphia sandwich shop. “He was a wonderful kid,” the shop owner said. “He was just 14 when he came here.”
- In May of 2015, Kyle Sing, 15, was putting in a fence on his family’s farm in Eldridge, Missouri when he became **caught in the auger** he was using to dig post holes. A family friend described the accident on Facebook: “The auger jumped out of the of the hole and grabbed a metal cattle panel, which grabbed Kyle and wrapped him, the panel and the T post all together.” The accident severely injured the boy’s legs, requiring multiple surgeries.
- In July 2014 in Duvall, Washington, 19-year-old Bradley Hogue was **killed by a rotating auger**—a metal device like a giant corkscrew while working inside the bark-blower truck. In January 2015, the state of Washington assessed employer Pacific Topsoils with penalties totaling \$199,000, noting that employers were regularly exposed to three mechanical hazards that could seriously injure or kill them.
- In March of 2015, 18-year-old Michael Petersen was working as a trash collector in Omaha, Nebraska when he stepped from the tuck and was killed by a motorist.
- 19-year-old Frank Madrano was working alone inside a home that was being built in Houston, Texas when a man entered to rob him. The intruder shot and killed Madrano.
- In March 2014, 14-year-old Rulon Barlow Jessop died while working for his father in Colorado City, Arizona, when the forklift he was operating went off a bridge embankment. Another boy, also riding on the machine, was able to jump off.
- In June 2013, Nikolay Kozhokar, a 17-year-old mechanic changing a tire on a semi-truck in Portland, Oregon was killed when the truck fell on him.
- In August 2012, Steven Branch, 15, died while working on a shrimp boat in Alabama. The youth’s baggy shorts were pulled into a winch.
- In Lucedale, Mississippi in July 2012, 15-year-old Thomas Harlan Jr. was killed while working when he was struck in the head by a pole moving on a tram.
- In May 2012, Cleason Nolt, 14, perished in a manure septic pond with his 18-year-old brother and father in Kennedyville, Maryland. (It is not uncommon for there to be multiple deaths when workers are overcome with noxious odors, especially as rescue attempts are made.)
- In July 2011, 17-year-old Jordan Ross Monen of Inwood, Iowa was killed in a farm accident. Monen was working on a cattle shed door from inside a payload bucket when

the payloader, which was being operated by another worker, accidentally moved forward and crushed him against the header of the doorway.

- In Tampico, Illinois that same month, two 14-year-old girls, Jade Garza and Hannah Kendall, were electrocuted while working to remove tassels on corn after coming into contact with a field irrigator on a farm.
- Also in July 2011, 17-year-old plumber Benjamin Graham died in Albany, Georgia after being electrocuted while working on a water pipe under a home.
- In August 2011, 16-year-old Damon Springer of Osgood, Ohio was struck by a bobcat front-end loader while working with his father in a family tree service company. Springer's father did not see the boy and accidentally backed into him, crushing him.
- In September 2011, 17-year-old Stephen N. Tiller was killed when crushed by a garbage truck while working for a family-owned sanitation company. Tiller was riding in the front of a front-loading garbage truck when the truck hit some bumps and sent the boy and another worker flying in front of the truck, which then ran him over.
- In October 2011, 16-year-old Armando Ramirez died in Lamont, California after inhaling hydrogen sulfide in a drainage tunnel at Community Recycling and Resource recycling company.
- A 17-year-old in California died when the forklift he was operating rolled over on him. The youth had only been employed one hour and misguidedly took the initiative to operate the forklift in June 2004.
- A 9-year-old ran over and killed his 6-year-old brother while driving a skid-steer loader in Michigan in 2004.
- In Iowa, an 8-year-old was killed helping his father and neighbor chop hay for silage on their dairy farm. The youth was helping, driving to and from the field location on a 4-wheel ATV to assist his father hook up each silage wagon. The boy drove up a slight embankment causing the ATV to roll over on its top and pinning him to the ground in the summer of 2004.

Addendum II

[The following guidance is provided by the Center for Disease Control and NIOSH.]

What kind of work shouldn't I do?

Child labor laws protect teen workers from many dangerous jobs.

In general, if you're under 18, you can't

- Drive anything with a motor on public streets as part of the job (17-year-olds may drive, but only for a few reasons that the law allows);
- Drive, ride on, repair, or work from a forklift, Bobcat, backhoe, or other powered machinery; (Although agricultural exemptions exist)
- Drive, ride on, repair, or work from powered hoists such as cherry pickers (16- or 17-year-olds can assist in operating patient-lifting devices when properly trained and supervised);
- Use power tools and machinery like a circular saw, chain saw, wood chipper, box crusher, paper baler, meat slicer, and most bakery machines.;
- Work in wrecking, demolition, excavation, or roofing;
- Work in mining, logging, a sawmill, forestry services, or forest firefighting;
- Work in meat and poultry plants that slaughter, package, or process meat;
- Work where you can be exposed to radiation; or
- Work where explosives are produced or stored.

If you're 14 or 15, the laws are even stricter. You also can't

- Bake or cook on the job, unless the cooking uses electric or gas grills with no open flames or deep fat fryers that by themselves can lower and raise baskets into and out of the oil;
- Go from house to house to sell things or do "sign-waving" (unless you are directly in front of the place where you work);
- Work as a lifeguard on elevated water slides or at lakes, rivers, oceans, beaches, quarries, or piers; (With training, 15-year-olds may be a lifeguard at pools and water parks.)
- Use most power-driven machinery;
- Work on a ladder or scaffold;
- Work in warehouses;
- Take jobs in construction, manufacturing, mining, and most types of businesses—such as dry cleaning or commercial laundry facilities—that process items; or

- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor.

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