

PREVENTING Work-Related Injuries to Teens

Newsletter from the *Teens at Work Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project*

Spring 2003

Attention Health Care Providers!

Work-Related Injuries to Persons Younger than 18 are Reportable to MDPH

At least semi-annually, health care facilities must report all work-related injuries to persons under 18 years of age that are treated in the facility. Physicians and other health care providers must report serious work-related injuries (and may report other injuries) among this population within ten days of diagnosis (105 CMR 300).

A serious work-related injury is defined as an injury resulting in death, hospitalization, or in the judgment of the treating physician, results in, or will result in:

- A. Significant scarring or disfigurement; OR
- B. Permanent disability; OR
- C. Protracted loss of consciousness; OR
- D. Loss of a body part or bodily function; OR
- E. Is less significant but similar to injuries sustained by other employees at the same worksite.

To Report

By telephone: Call 617-624-5632.

By mail: Send reporting form to MDPH address listed on the front of this newsletter.

By fax: Fax reporting form to 617-624-5696.

For more information about reporting, to request reporting forms, or to discuss hospital computer-generated reporting: Call 617-624-5632.

Materials Available from MDPH's *Teens at Work Project*

Are You a Working Teen?

Pamphlet for teens contains child labor laws and related information. (2002)

Under 18 and hurt on the job?: Information on Workers' Compensation

Pamphlet for teens on workers' compensation (2002)

Massachusetts Employers' Guide: Young Worker Health & Safety and the Child Labor Laws

Recommendations for employers and a poster of the child labor laws. (1999)

Know Your Rights

Poster for teens with information about wages, hours, health and safety. (1996)

Protecting Your Working Teen: A Guide for Parents

One sheet version of former pamphlet containing child labor laws and related information. (2002)

Safe Work/Safe Workers: A Guide for Teaching High School Students about Occupational Health and Safety

Three-hour curriculum containing short video and learning activities. (1997)

Call 617-624-5632 or email Teens.atwork@state.ma.us for more information.

Project Update

Work is part of everyday life for millions of teens. In 2001, nationwide, approximately one third of teens 15-17 years of age were in the labor force, on average, at any given point in time. This figure was similar for teens in Massachusetts, where, on average, over 77,000 teenagers between the ages of 15-17 were employed on any given day in 2001. National studies have found that many younger teens also work, and that eighty percent of youth have held jobs by the time they finish high school. Work can provide important benefits for youth; however it may also pose health and safety risks. Each year in the U.S., 200,000 young workers are injured on the job, 65,000 are injured seriously enough to seek emergency medical care, and 70 are killed at work.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's *Teens at Work Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project* collects data on work-related injuries to teens less than 18 years of age in Massachusetts. Since 1993, more than 5,500 cases of work-related injuries have been identified by this surveillance system using a variety of data sources (primarily workers' compensation records for injuries resulting in five or more lost workdays and records from a sample of twelve hospital emergency departments).

Follow-up interviews are conducted with injured teens to learn more about teen work experiences and the circumstances surrounding their injuries. Data are used to target intervention and prevention activities in the Commonwealth. Findings have been used to develop recommendations for changes in equipment and job design in specific workplaces. The *Teens at Work* staff also collaborate with other agencies and organizations to promote health and safety training for youth and employers, and to develop and disseminate educational materials on young worker health and safety and child labor laws for various audiences - parents, employers, and health care providers, as well as teens themselves.

The last *Teens at Work* newsletter focused on injuries to teen restaurant workers. In this issue, we look at injuries to teens working in grocery stores, the second most common industry in which Massachusetts youth are employed. Additional information about work-related injuries to teens in Massachusetts can be found on our website at www.state.ma.us/dph/bhsre/ohsp/ohsp/htm.

What's New?

New Forklift Sticker

In 2000, a 16-year-old Massachusetts teen was killed when the forklift he was operating at work overturned. It is against both state and federal child labor laws for anyone under 18 years of age to operate forklifts at work. In response to this tragic incident the Occupational Health Surveillance Program has developed a warning sticker to be placed on forklifts. The sticker informs employers, as well as all operators, that teens are not allowed to operate forklifts at work, except in certain agricultural settings. The sticker has been disseminated in collaboration with the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General and the US Department of Labor. *Teens at Work* distributed stickers to forklift manufacturers, distributors, and repair shops in Massachusetts. For stickers, call 617-624-5632.



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Teens at Work Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project
 Occupational Health Surveillance Program
 Massachusetts Department of Public Health
 250 Washington Street, 6th Floor
 Boston, MA 02108

Injuries to Young Grocery Store Workers

More Massachusetts teens work in grocery stores than in any other industry except restaurants. Approximately 12% of all employed 15-17-year-olds - more than 10,000 teens - worked in grocery stores in 1996. Grocery stores are also second only to restaurants in terms of the numbers of injuries to teen workers in Massachusetts. Of the 4,475 injuries among workers less than 18-years-old identified by the *Teens at Work* Project from 1993-2000, 13% (n=558) occurred in grocery stores.¹

Although approximately the same numbers of teenage boys and girls were employed in grocery stores, boys sustained 72% of all injuries to young grocery store workers. This finding is similar to patterns of work-related injuries to teens among all industries combined and is likely explained, at least in part, by the assignment of more hazardous tasks to boys.

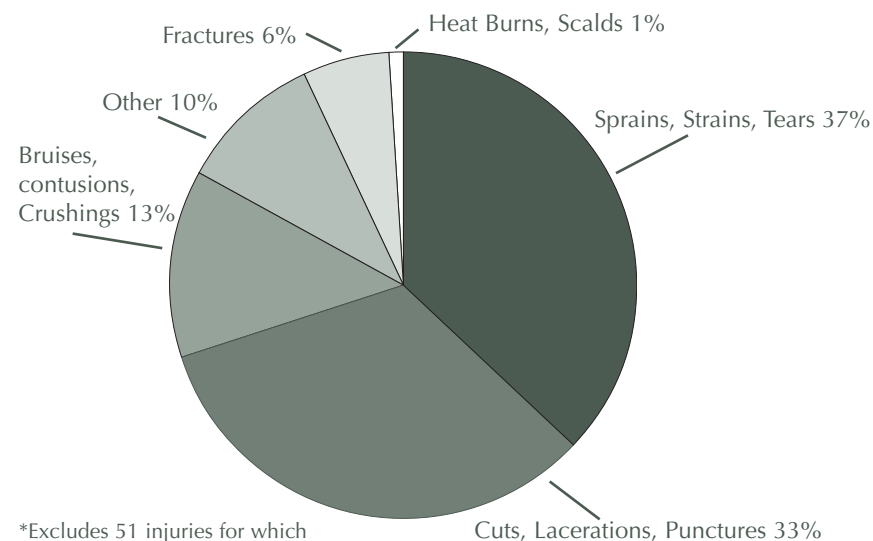
Sprains and strains were the most common injuries (37%, n=186) sustained by young grocery store workers (Figure 1). Slightly less than half (48%) of all sprains and strains affected the back.

Bagging groceries and lifting items were listed as the causes of injury for 47% (n=76) of the sprain and strain cases identified through workers' compensation claims. Back injuries among young workers are of particular concern because individuals with back injuries may be at increased risk for other back injuries later in life.

Cuts and lacerations were the second most common type of injury (33%, n=169) among teens working in grocery stores. Sixty-five percent (n= 72) of the cases identified through workers' compensation claims indicate that the injuries were sustained while using knives, razor blades or box cutters. Connecticut

Figure 1: Occupational Injuries to Teens Employed in Grocery Stores by Injury Type Massachusetts: 1993-2000

Number of injuries reported=507*



*Excludes 51 injuries for which information about injury type was not available

Source: Teens at Work Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project: July 1993 - December 2000.

17-year-old shelf stocker

I had worked a 13-hour shift on Saturday. On Sunday morning my back was sore and after two hours at work, it really hurt. I grabbed a back brace from the meat department and told my manager that I was in pain. He asked me to stay because we were short staffed that day. He told me not to lift anything anymore, but by 3 p.m. my back really hurt and I could barely walk. I drove myself home and went to see my doctor the next morning.

Note: Child labor laws limit work shifts for 16 and 17-year-olds to a maximum of nine hours per day.

16-year-old produce stocker

I was cutting up big cardboard boxes (used to display watermelons) to throw them in the compactor. While holding the box, I stuck the box cutter in and pulled it down the cardboard. The blade was not deep enough into the box, so the knife slipped and cut my hand. I told my manager right away and a co-worker took me to the hospital.

17-year-old deli clerk

I was cleaning the deli meat slicer which has a blade that can be opened (exposed) and closed (unexposed). There is a sign on the slicer that says you must be over 18 year old to operate it, but I use it all the time. In order for the blade to be open to clean, the machine has to be on. I was cleaning the front of the slicer when my foot slipped on a piece of saran wrap that had been thrown on the floor. My body fell forward into the slicer. I cut about 3/4 of my nail and the tip of my finger off. A co-worker called 911 and I was taken by ambulance to the ER.

Note: Child labor laws prohibit anyone under the age of 18 from using or cleaning meat slicers.

What You Can Do to Prevent Injuries to Young Workers

Employers

- Identify and eliminate hazards as much as possible.
- Comply with child labor laws and occupational health and safety regulations applicable to your business.
- Train teen workers to use safe work practices, recognize hazards, be prepared for emergencies, and speak up with concerns.
- Assure that teen workers are appropriately supervised.

Educators

- Be familiar with federal and state child labor laws.
- Discuss workplace hazards and students' rights and responsibilities as workers.
- Ensure that school-based work experience programs provide safe and healthful environments.

Parents

- Take an active role in the employment decisions of your teens.
- Discuss the types of tasks involved and the training and supervision provided by the employer.
- Know where you can get information about child labor laws.

Teens

- Know your rights to a safe and healthful workplace.
- Learn to recognize hazards at work and speak up when you see them.
- Participate in training programs at work or request training if none is offered.
- Use safe work practices.
- Learn where you can get information about child labor laws, health and safety, and your rights.

Health Care Providers

- Recognize that work issues may be relevant to the health of your teen patients.
- Consider disseminating educational materials about work to your patients. (See back cover for a list of materials.)
- Know the child labor laws if signing off on work permits.
- Establish if diagnosed injuries are work-related.
- Comply with the reporting law (105 CMR 300) by reporting work-related injuries to teens to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Adapted from DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 95-125.

For More Information

On child labor laws or wages:

Mass. Attorney General's Office
Fair Labor and Business Practices Division
617-727-3465; www.ago.state.ma.us/labor

U.S. Dept. of Labor
Wage & Hour Division
617-624-6700; www.dol.gov/esa/whd

On workers' compensation:

Mass. Dept. of Industrial Accidents
617-727-4900, ext. 470 or 800-323-3249, ext. 470;
www.state.ma.us/dia

On discrimination at work or in hiring:

Mass. Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)
617-727-3990

U.S. Dept. of Commerce
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
617-565-3200 or 800-669-4000; www.eeoc.gov

On workplace health and safety:

U.S. Dept. of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
617-565-9860; www.osha.gov

Mass. Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Occupational Safety
617-969-7177; www.state.ma.us/dos

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)
617-825-7233

Western MassCOSH
413-731-0760; www.westernmasscosh.org

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Teens at Work Project • teens.atwork@state.ma.us
617-624-5632; www.state.ma.us/dph/bhsre/ohsp



New Workers in New England: Health and Safety Ideas from Around the Region

This column highlights efforts of various organizations and agencies within New England to promote health and safety for working youth. This year's focus is on the Maine Departments of Labor and Education.

Using Focus Groups to Create Effective Educational Strategies

*** Teen Focus Groups:** The Maine Department of Education has used focus groups to explore what teenagers know about workplace safety, where they came across this information, and how likely they are to speak up about workplace hazards. Some of the results include: teens knew little about the child labor laws and viewed them more as restrictions than rights; the level of supervision varied greatly; and the primary safety concern was late night security. The information gleaned from these groups has informed Maine's development of educational materials for teens and employers.

*** Employer Focus Groups:** The Maine Department of Labor has held focus groups for representatives of companies that employ young people to learn about the types of jobs where young people are employed, whether young people are given safety training on the job, and what the department can do to help employers prevent injuries to young workers. Some of the results include: employers do not have in-depth knowledge of the child labor laws; they provide teen workers the same training as adults; they need activity-based training and welcome resources and collaboration.

Training and Educational Materials for Employers

The Maine Department of Labor has used funds from a child labor violation settlement to produce SAFETEEN, a kit that helps employers teach their teen employees about workplace safety. Each SAFETEEN kit includes a book of safety training exercises that employers can use to teach teens about workplace safety, a booklet about workplace safety and child labor laws for employers, multiple copies of a booklet about workplace safety for teens, wallet cards, posters, and information about obtaining Starting Safely, Maine's young worker safety curriculum. The kit is sent to employers under a cover letter signed by Maine's governor and is distributed through Maine's Career Center network. Maine is currently evaluating this effort.

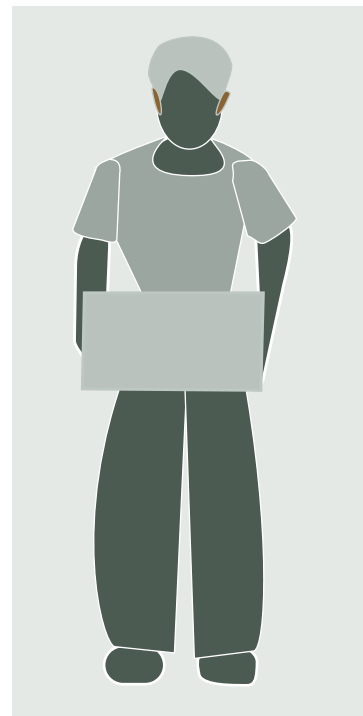
Occupational Safety Training for Teachers

- * The Department of Labor and the Jobs for Maine Graduates program provide workshops for teachers and job placement professionals, training them to use the Starting Safely curriculum.
- * The Department of Labor, in collaboration with the University of Southern Maine, provides a week-long Summer Safety Institute for Educators on OSHA regulations and occupational safety issues.
- * The Department of Education has a vocational education consultant responsible for safety education in vocational education programs.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

- * The Maine Department of Labor has produced PSAs that have been shown in movie theatres (at a special nonprofit rate). Other theatre chains around the country have agreed to show young worker safety PSAs without charge.
- * Maine also has produced two 30-second PSAs for television on teen worker safety that have been aired across the state.

For more information or to receive a copy of SAFETEEN, contact Chris Miara, National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, EDC at cmiara@edc.org or 617-618-2238 or Lynne Lamstein, Maine Department of Labor, at Lynne.C.Lamstein@state.me.us or 207-624-6465



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researchers found similar problems with case cutters several years ago. The good news is that when they conducted a follow-up intervention study, they found that a combination of new safety cutters and training reduced cutting injury rates among young grocery store workers.²

What Injured Teens Have to Say

Teens at Work Project staff have conducted phone interviews with 82 young grocery store workers injured on-the-job. While the information from these interviews is not necessarily representative of all young grocery store workers who have been injured, it nevertheless provides some important insights. Of these interviewed teens:

- Forty-five percent reported they had received no

on-the-job training on how to work safely and avoid injury;

- Fourteen percent did not have work permits or educational certificates;
- Teens reported having to limit or not participate in their usual activities an average of 27 days as a result of their injuries; and
- Seventy-two percent believed their injuries were preventable.

¹ Percent based on 4,234 injuries for which industry was known.

² Banco I, Lapidus G, Monoploi J, Zavoski R. Safe teen work project: A study to reduce cutting injuries among young and inexperienced workers. *Am J Ind Med* 1997 May; 31 (5):619-622

Massachusetts Task Force Releases Report on Protecting Young Workers

Ron Vega*, a 17-year-old Boston resident, was stocking shelves in the storeroom of the toy store where he worked. He was standing on a ladder leaning against the shelves, and his coworker was passing 60-lb boxes up the ladder to him. Suddenly, the whole shelf unit fell backwards, pulling Ron down with it. By the next morning he couldn't move his arm and decided to go to the hospital. The doctor at the emergency room told him he had sprained his back and rotator cuff. The injury caused him to miss 11 days of work, and cut down on activities for more than two months. At only 17 years of age, he expects pain for the rest of his life as a result of this injury.

Concerned with the high number of teen work-related injuries in the state, community groups, employers, educators, and parent organizations joined forces to establish a state-wide task force focused on protecting teen workers in Massachusetts. In January 2003 the Task Force released a report containing a comprehensive list of recommendations developed by the Task Force for key decision-makers that, if enacted, could prevent thousands of teens from becoming injured or ill from unsafe working conditions.

"Previous efforts in Massachusetts to protect teens in the workplace have been fragmented," said Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, executive director of the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH), a non-profit workplace health and safety advocacy group, "We need a comprehensive plan that will encompass parent, teen and employer education, enforcement of regulations, and changes in the environments in which teens work," said Goldstein-Gelb.

Hopefully, through the efforts of the task force, fewer injuries like Ron's will occur, thus ensuring positive and healthful work experiences for Massachusetts' teenagers.

To learn more about issues facing teens in the workplace and

about the Massachusetts Young Worker Initiative Task Force, contact Marcy Goldstein-Gelb at MassCOSH, 617-825-7233 x15.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality of a minor.

National Young Worker Safety Resource Center

Massachusetts teachers and job placement professionals can take advantage of the services of the National Young Worker Safety Resource Center. This center—with offices at the Education Development Center, Inc in Newton, MA and the Labor Occupational Health Program in Berkeley, California—is funded by OSHA to use a train-the-trainer model to promote the safety of young workers. The Center primarily serves California and the Northeast states.

Young Worker Safety Resource Center staff train a master trainer in each state to use the Safe Work/Safe Workers curriculum, a three-hour workshop for high school students originally developed by EDC and the OHSP. The master trainer then uses the curriculum to train teachers, job placement professionals, employers, and anyone else interested in giving teens the skills they need to be safe at work. The Center provides copies of the curriculum to those who participate in the training, and offers a small stipend to teachers and others who actually deliver the workshop to students.

The training is free, hands-on, informative, and fun. For information on upcoming trainings, or more information about the National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, contact

Chris Miara, EDC
55 Chapel St.
Newton, MA 02458
phone: 617-618-2238
email: cmiara@edc.org

Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project is a project of the Occupational Health Surveillance Program of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. *Teens at Work* is funded by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Violence in the Workplace: What Teens and their Employers Need to Know

By Lisa McCarthy and Marci Diamond, MDPH Sexual Assault Prevention and Survivor Services (with contributions from Beatriz Pazos)

Did you know?

- Each year in the US nearly 1 million individuals become victims of violent crime while working (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994).
- Homicide is the leading cause of death in the workplace for women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).
- Homicide is the leading cause of work-related death among 16- and 17-year-olds (NIOSH, 2002).
- Violent crime in the workplace results in the loss of 1,751,100 days of work each year, with over \$55 million in lost wages annually (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994).
- Among working teens surveyed in one large Massachusetts high school, 26% reported having been verbally assaulted at work, 10% reported being sexually harassed, and 11% reported being physically assaulted on the job (Personal communication with K. Rauscher, 2002).

Workplace violence includes physical and sexual violence, stalking, threats of violence, verbal abuse and sexual harassment. It can involve current or former employers, employees, coworkers, visitors, contractors, and customers. Violence of any kind can leave a person feeling vulnerable, fearful, angry, uncomfortable, embarrassed, and humiliated. Physical and/or emotional injury may occur, with devastating and long-lasting effects. Under state and federal regulations, employers are responsible for providing a safe workplace for employees.

Many teens work in industries at high-risk for robbery and other violence, such as retail trade and service industries (Current Population Survey). Characteristics of workplaces that are particularly vulnerable to violence include:

- Contact with customers or clients;
 - Access to cash;
 - Unsecured working environment; and
 - Late-night operation (National Consumers League) 2002.
- Working alone is another risk factor, especially when combined with the above elements.

In Washington, minors are prohibited from working alone in service occupations past 8 pm without an adult present. Maine law prohibits minors from working alone in cash-based businesses, day or night.

As with other occupational risks, employers can take steps to identify hazards, and reduce the opportunity for and consequences of violence in the workplace.

OSHA released its “Recommendations for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs in Late Night Retail Establishments” in 1998 to help employers keep their employees safe. There are five program components with steps employers can take to reduce risks (for more information visit the OSHA website at www.osha.gov):

1) Management Commitment and Employee Involvement

- Create and share a policy of violence prevention.
- Take all incidents seriously.
- Work with outside agencies such as the police and landlords to improve physical safety.

2) Worksite Analysis

- Perform a step-by-step look at the workplace to find existing and potential hazards.
- Review records and past incidents.
- Workplace security analysis
- Reduce the risk of robbery.
- Increase the effort that a perpetrator must expend.
- Increase risks to the perpetrator.
- Reduce the rewards to the perpetrator.

3) Hazard Prevention and Control

- Increase visibility and lighting.
- Increase the number of workers at night.
- Use drop safes.
- Limit access to areas of the establishment.
- Install video surveillance equipment.
- Keep minimal cash in register.
- Lock doors when not open.
- Establish emergency procedures, systems of communication.

4) Training

- Train all staff on potential security hazards and procedures to protect themselves.

5) Evaluation

• Keep records of all injuries, incidents, policies, trainings. Prompt, effective responses to potentially violent situations, including sexual harassment, promote workers safety, improve retention, and can reduce employer liability. It is extremely important to respond to the potential for violence before an incident occurs.

If a young worker is harassed or threatened at work, s/he should take the following steps:

- Be clear about personal boundaries;
- Document all forms of harassment or threats including dates, locations, actions, statements, and any witnesses;

- Get support from family, friends, a supervisor, a union, an employee assistance program, or another resource listed below;
- Consider filing a complaint with the employer, or with the police if the employer is unresponsive; and
- Consider filing a complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and/or through the courts.

The resources below can provide support to teens who have experienced workplace violence, as well as to their employers.

Resources for Teens and Their Employers Concerned About Violence in the Workplace:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), 617-338-0500 (voice): state agency for filing complaints of

National News Flash – Recommended Changes in Jobs Considered Off-Limits for Youth

Both state and federal child labor laws prohibit young workers from working in certain high hazard jobs. However, the federal and many state child labor laws have remained largely unchanged for decades. (See below for list of jobs currently prohibited for youth less than 18 years old in Massachusetts.) Experts have recommended that the list of prohibited activities be updated to reflect changes in patterns of youth employment and new knowledge about occupational health and safety risks. The U.S. Department of Labor commissioned the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to review the scientific literature on job hazards and make recommendations regarding changes in the list of prohibited work activities for youth. In July 2002, the U.S. Department of Labor released the NIOSH report, which recommends a number of changes in the federal list of jobs considered too dangerous for youth. For example, NIOSH recommends prohibiting youth less than 18 years old from employment in garbage collection, construction and at heights greater than 6 feet. For a copy of the report National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Recommendations to the U.S. Department of Labor for Changes to Hazardous Orders contact the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor at rglass@fenix2.dol-esa.gov.

Jobs Currently Prohibited for Youth Less Than 18 in Massachusetts

This list is a compilation of jobs prohibited by either state or federal child labor laws. There are some exceptions for student learners in school sponsored programs, and there are different restrictions that apply to youth employed in agriculture. There are additional restrictions for youth less than 16 years of age.

sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1-800-669-EEOC (voice)/ 1-800-800-3302 (TDD): federal agency for filing complaints of sexual harassment and other forms of employment-related discrimination.

9 to 5 National Association of Working Women, 1-800-522-0925 (voice): job problem hotline.

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, 617-825-7233: a non-profit organization dealing with workers' health and safety and rights.

MA Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA) 617-727-5200 (voice): independent state agency that advocates for and assists victims of crime.

Persons under 18 years old may NOT:

Drive a vehicle or forklift

Use meat slicers or power-driven bakery machines

Work 30 feet or more above ground or water

Handle, serve or sell alcoholic beverages

Use circular or ban saws, guillotine shears or box crushers

Use power-driven woodworking machines

Use power-driven hoisting apparatus

Use power-driven paper-products machines

Use power-driven metal-forming, punching or shearing machines

Use buffing or polishing equipment

Manufacture brick, tile or kindred products

Manufacture or store explosives

Work in wrecking, demolition, shipbreaking or excavation

Work slaughtering, packing or processing meat

Work in roofing, railway or excavation operations

Work in foundry or around blast furnaces

Work manufacturing phosphorous matches

Work where they are exposed to radioactive substances

Work as a firefighter or engineer on a boat

Oil or clean hazardous machinery in motion

