

Hiring teens

Take these two steps, and you'll be less likely to hear, "Oops!"

If you are hiring young adults for summer jobs, keep at least these couple of things in mind:

- Train them.
- Think twice about the jobs you assign them.

Teens can be great workers. They're often energetic and want to do well.

They also have a high frequency of injury. That's the result of a sense of risk that hasn't fully matured, behaviors that are impulsive, and inexperience in the jobs they're asked to do.

And so young people working food service jobs, for instance, burn their hands with hot coffee or hot soup. Or cut themselves on knives. Or get grease burns running the deep-fryer. Teens running errands or deliveries get into auto accidents. Fractures are not uncommon among the claims SFM sees coming from young people. One young man last fall fell off a roof. A 16-year-old running a wood-chopper, which by law he was too young to be doing, tried to clear a jam and lost his left arm.

Training and explaining your expectations to young employees go a long ways toward preventing injuries. The first few weeks on the job are often when young workers are most prone to accidents. Start training right away. Don't overlook the little stuff. Support your training with signs and visual reminders.

To think of summer teen employees as "temporary" and therefore not worth spending time to train is shortsighted and can end up costing you more in the form of work injury costs and higher workers' compensation premiums.

Keep in mind also that state and federal laws recognize that young people are not always ready to handle jobs that expose them to certain risks. People under 18, for instance, are prohibited from:

- Serving or handling alcoholic beverages.
- Working in the presence of hazardous materials.
- Working in hazardous operations like lumbering, quarries, and certain construction projects.
- Driving passenger vehicles like buses and cabs.
- Operating power-driven machinery like forklifts, grinders, presses and woodworking machines.

You may need to check with an employment attorney about the specifics on these and other jobs as they relate to your organization. It's really all about using caution and good sense in deciding what you assign a young person to do.

Additionally, Wisconsin employers are required to obtain a work permit to hire a minor before doing so.

Bottom line: Before you hire teens for the summer, think about whether the work you need to get done is suitable for young people and how you will go about teaching them the do's and don'ts of the job.

There are additional restrictions when hiring teenagers, depending on the person's age, regarding the time of day, number of hours he or she can work, the types of businesses he or she can be employed by and types of jobs he or she can perform. Download or order SFM's "Hiring minors" Legal Advisory from www.sfmic.com for additional details on these restrictions.

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