

# THINKING OF EMPLOYING YOUNG CONSTRUCTION WORKERS?

## HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

### LAW

Under federal law, **no one under the age of 16** can work in construction.

16-17 year olds are **forbidden** from certain tasks including:

- Roofing
- Excavation
- Demolition
- Other hazardous tasks

Some state laws **may be stricter** for workers under 18.

### IMPACT

Construction is the **2nd deadliest industry for minors** in terms of worker fatality rate.

Workers aged 16-19 had the **highest non-fatal injury rate** of any age group in the construction industry from 2013-2015, at 139.3 injuries for every 10,000 FTEs.

This is well above the non-fatal injury rate for most adults in construction (107.6-116.7/10,000 FTEs), and **almost twice the injury rate for adults** who are 65 or older (73.8/10,000 FTEs).

### THE VULNERABILITIES

As teenage bodies grow, **risk of fractures is increased**.

Adolescent workers **may be physically smaller** than the intended users of construction equipment, which has been shown to increase risk of injury.

**Brain development and hormonal changes** may affect risk-taking and decision-making.

Younger worker injuries are more likely to occur when there is not adequate **training and supervision**.

### HOW TO PLAY IT SAFE

Consult your state's labor department to learn about your **local laws and regulations** regarding child labor.

Instruct teens to **observe** a work task being safely performed and **demonstrate** they can safely do it, **before** they independently perform it.

[www.osha.gov/youngworkers](http://www.osha.gov/youngworkers) has resources to help you understand and comply with the law to employ young workers safely.

Adam Moskowitz, NIOSH PhD trainee

#### SOURCES:

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries. Ensuring the safety of youth in skilled trades training programs. St. Paul, MN; 2020. <https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2020/mandated/200079.pdf>

CPWR - The Center for Construction Research and Training. Chart Book (6th edition). Silver Spring, MD; 2020



MIDWEST CENTER FOR  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY  
[mcohs.umn.edu](http://mcohs.umn.edu)



SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA