



5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job

— Young Field Workers —

1. Get safety training
2. Look for hazards in your workplace
3. Follow safety rules
4. Know your rights
5. Ask questions and get help



TRUE STORIES

Many growers and farmers are eager to hire young workers, especially during busy times. **In the U.S., work activities in agriculture are restricted for workers under age 16. Make sure you know the laws.** Because there are many hazards in agriculture, it is important for you to get training. Find out what to do so you do not get hurt, like these young workers did....

“Sami worked for a neighborhood farmer. One day when she was climbing a ladder to reach the top of the tree to pick the fruit, she fell and broke her leg. She could not work for many weeks.”



“ Maria was a field worker and picked cucumbers and other vegetables. She had to stoop over picking in the hot sun all day. Her back hurt all the time and she often felt dizzy. Sometimes she was working in the field when the pesticide was sprayed on the crop and got all over her, too. She went home feeling sick to her stomach whenever that happened.”

“Julio was driving a tractor down the side of the road. When he swerved to move over to let a car pass him, the tractor became unbalanced; when it rolled over he was trapped and crushed by the tractor. He died on the way to the hospital.”



It's your boss' job to make sure your workplace is safe!

This factsheet is for young people who work in agriculture. U.S. laws require employers to provide *all* workers with a safe place to work. There are also laws that give special protection to *younger* workers. Not all employers know about or follow these laws, and the laws are not always enforced. But it is important for you to know what your employer *should* do.

In farm work, your boss can do a lot to improve safety. For example, your boss should:

- Provide equipment that is safe to use, such as ladders and tools.
- Provide lifting equipment for moving heavy materials.
- Provide time for workers to take regular breaks out of the sun.
- Provide drinking water to keep workers from getting overheated.
- Provide protective gear, including gloves, safety goggles, ear plugs, and dust masks.
- Make sure you are given notice to leave the field before chemicals are sprayed.

It's your job to follow the 5 steps for staying safe!

1. Get safety training

The boss must train you to do *every* task that's part of your job, like how to handle any chemicals you need to use, how to lift safely, or how to use tools or ladders safely.

2. Look for hazards in your workplace

If you work in agriculture, there are many things that can hurt you or make you sick. You can spot these hazards before they cause a problem.

3. Follow safety rules

Use your training to protect yourself and other workers. Do every task the way you have been trained. Keep your eyes open and report any problems you see.

4. Know your rights

U.S. and state laws protect workers on the job. There are also special laws that protect workers under 16. These laws say:

- Employers must provide a safe workplace.
- Employers must provide workers' compensation to pay your medical expenses and lost wages if you get injured.
- Workers under 16 may not do certain dangerous tasks, and may only work certain hours (not too late, too early, or too long).

For more information go to www.youthrules.dol.gov or www.osha.gov/SLR/teenworkers.

5. Ask questions and get help

Pay attention. If something seems unsafe, ask about it. If you don't know how to do a task you are given, ask a co-worker or your boss for help. If that does not work, get help from someone else, such as a safety or union representative, teacher, or parent. For more information, contact:

- National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, www.youngworkers.org.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Teen Workers page, www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, www.youth.eeoc.gov.
- Your state labor dept., www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm or your state OSHA, www.osha.gov/dcsp.osp.

The *5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job* series includes an overview pamphlet on young worker job safety and specific factsheets on:

- Construction
- Agricultural Field Work
- Hotel Cleaning
- Restaurants & Food Service
- Motor Vehicle Repair
- Working in Shops & Stores

Hazards in Agricultural Work

This chart lists some of the hazards you need to watch out for, and some things you can do about them. This chart does NOT include tasks that are typically prohibited for young workers under the age of 16 such as working on roofs or silos, or operating large or powered equipment such as bulldozers or forklifts.

	HAZARDS	WHAT YOU CAN DO
FALLS	Working on ladders or up high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure ladders are stable before climbing. If the ladder could be bumped, secure it. • When using a ladder, use both hands when going up or down. Carry tools in a belt. • Do not stand on the top step of a ladder. • Do not move a ladder when someone is using it. • Make sure workers on farm machines are not driving near workers on ladders. • Wear shoes or boots, not sandals.
	Lifting, bending, and reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use trailers or other devices to move heavy items. • Get help from a co-worker when lifting heavy items. • Follow these safe lifting methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bend your legs, not your back, when you pick up something heavy. • Hold the heavy item close to your body. • Move to face the heavy object before you lift instead of twisting your body.
BODY STRAIN	Repetitive or awkward work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change your position so you are not working in the same bent posture all the time. • Take regular breaks to change your pace and position for doing your work. • Take turns doing different types of tasks.
	Working on or near tractors or other farm machinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear safety glasses, provided by your boss. • Wear strong shoes. Do not wear sandals. • Work a safe distance away from moving equipment. • Do not wear clothing that is too loose. It can get caught in moving machinery.
HIT BY OBJECTS	Pesticides, paints, solvents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for information about the chemicals you use. Read the labels and follow instructions. • Wear goggles and gloves when needed. Your employer should provide them. • If you need to wear a respirator the chemical is TOO DANGEROUS for young workers. • If the work is very dusty, use a dust mask provided by your employer.
CHEMICALS	Heat, sun exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink a lot of water. • Take rest breaks out of the sun or heat. • Wear a hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, and sunscreen to protect yourself from too much sun. • If you start to feel dizzy or sick to your stomach, tell a co-worker. Get into the shade, drink water, and put water on your head and arms to cool down.
HEAT ILLNESS	Noise / loud equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is so much noise that you need to shout to be heard, your hearing can be damaged. • Wear ear plugs or other hearing protection provide by your boss.
OTHER	Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not swim in irrigation ditches. The sides of the ditch may be too steep to get out.
	Electrical hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not touch or plug in electrical equipment if there is water around. • Do not use equipment that has a frayed cord or looks damaged. Tell your boss about it. • Keep metal ladders and irrigation poles away from electrical power lines.