**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 jobs for working youth in 2012 are:

Agriculture: Harvesting Crops and Using Machinery

Construction and Height Work

Traveling Youth Sales Crews

Outside Helper: Landscaping, Groundskeeping and Lawn Service

Driver/Operator: Forklifts, Tractors, and ATV’s

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.

1. **Agriculture: Harvesting Crops and Using Machinery**

According to the CDC, in 2009 more than one million youth younger than 20 years old lived on farms and 519,000 of this number performed work. An additional 230,000 youth and adolescents were hired to work on farms. 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 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 Kansas State University (KSU) in 2007, there were 715 deaths on farms involving workers of all ages. More than 80,000 workers suffered disabling injuries. Working with livestock and farm machinery caused most of the injuries and tractors caused most of the deaths, according to John Slocombe, an extension farm safety specialist at KSU.

Agriculture poses dangers for teens as well. According to NIOSH, between 1995 and 2002, an average of 113 youth less than 20 years of age die annually from farm-related injuries. 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. In 2009, an estimated 16,100 children and adolescents were injured while performing farm work. Every summer young farmworkers are run over or lose limbs to tractors and machinery. Heatstress and pesticides pose grave dangers. Riding in open pickups is another danger on farms.

Examples of recent farm tragedies follow:

In August 2011 in Kremlin, Oklahoma, two 17-year-olds, Bryce Gannon and Tyler

Zander, lost legs in a grain augur they became entrapped in.

In July, 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 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 entangles in the shaft of a manure spreader in Arcanum, Ohio.

In September 2010 in Minden Iowa, 18-year-old John Martin Dea tried to roll start a

tractor he was driving by going down a hill. The tractor began to bounce, went out of

control, and rolled over on a terrace. Dea was thrown from the tractor during the incidentand killed.

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 driving a tractor as he loaded stone in Skaneateles, NY in October 2008, John

Rice, 16, lost control. The tractor began rolling backwards down a hill. The tractor

overturned, ejecting Rice, running him over and causing critical injuries that nearly killed

him.

In September 2008, Jacob Kruwell, age 14, was driving a tractor in Lake Mills,

Wisconsin when the tractor’s wheels went off the pavement, causing the load it was

carrying to shift and flip the tractor which landed on top of the boy, killing him.

Matthew Helmick, 16, died when the tractor he was driving overturned on the farm that his family owned in Doylestown, Ohio in August 2008. According to reports, Helmick was turning the tractor into a driveway and made the turn too fast, hitting an embankment and causing the tractor to flip. He was pinned underneath the vehicle.

A 15-year-old boy, Michael Paul Young, died in June 2008 on a Western Kentucky farm as he worked beside his father and brothers. Young fell into a truck load of grain that acted like quicksand. He sank into the grain and died of asphyxiation before his family and fellow workers could rescue him.

In May 2008, Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez, a 17-year-old farmworker died of heat

stroke after working nine and a half hours in a California vineyard as temperatures

hovered in the mid-90s. Jimenez was pregnant at the time. According to the United Farm Workers and the girl’s family, the labor contractor in the vineyard ignored California laws that require workers to be given breaks and provided with shade. Workers also said they were not given adequate amounts of water.

Edilberto Cardenas, 17, died in a Groveland, Florida citrus grove in January 2008—his first day on the job. Cardenas was emptying bags of oranges into a truck when then truck backed up and ran him over.

In December 2006, a 10-year-old Florida youth accidentally ran over his 2-year-old

brother while driving a pickup truck in a Florida orange grove. The boy had been driving

trucks in the fields since he was only 8 years old.

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 16 help harvest our nation’s crops each year, and the exemptions allow even younger kids to work legally on very small farms. Field investigations by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs and Human Rights Watch, members of the Child Labor Coalition, have found 9- and 10-year-old children working in the fields under harsh conditions.

NCL and the Child Labor Coalition believe 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.

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 in farm work 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 is in agreement and tried to prohibit work by minors when it proposed occupational child safety rules for farms in September 2011. Unfortunately, because of political pressure from some members of the farm community, DOL abandoned its attempt to increase hazardous work protections for agriculture.

1. **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 2007, an estimated 372,000 workers of all ages were injured in construction accidents and construction led other industries in the number of deaths among all workers: 1,178. A construction worker is nearly three times as likely to die from a work accident as the average American worker. One bright spot: construction fatalities among private companies have fallen 40 percent since 2006. However, the potential injury remains a very dangerous one.

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.

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 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.

That same month, Travis DeSimone, 17, was working on a Marlborough, New

Hampshire farm, converting a barn into a kennel when a concrete wall collapsed and

killed him.

Roofing, siding, sheet metal work, electrical work, and concrete work all pose dangers. Falls,

contact with electric current, transportation incidents, and being stuck by objects are among the

most common causes of construction accident deaths.

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 about 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.

1. **Traveling Youth Crews Performing Door-to-Door Sales**

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. 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.

Frequent 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 take them to jail because jail seemed like it would be 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 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 arrested.

"The industry’s out of control as far as violence," 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 escaped 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, lowest sellers are forced to fight each other or punished

by being made 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 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 of 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 *America’s Most Wanted* Web site.

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 goods to sell.

Although 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-todoor.

In Lawton, Oklahoma, a19-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 (April 2003).

Consumers are also at-risk of the dangers associated with traveling sales. Traveling sales crew

members have committee 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.

**Reckless driving**

**T**raveling 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 and killed from a van 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 (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

The young salesman 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**

This excerpt from “Shauna’s Story” (a memoir of life on the road with a traveling sales crew

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.

**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**

**Y**oung 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 8 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 Web site 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 at 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 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.

1. **Outside Helper, Landscaping, 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 job also requires a great deal of time

spent driving in vehicles which, as we have noted, is a dangerous work-related activity.

These incidents highlight the dangers of outside work:

In April 2012, a six-year-old, Jeffrey Bourgeois, was helping is father with his

landscaping business. 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. 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 dumptruck 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. The operation of all-terrain

vehicles (ATVs) or tractors for non-agricultural labor is only prohibited if the equipment is used

for transporting passengers, an activity prohibited for minors under age 18.

1. **Driver/Operator, Forklifts, Tractors, and All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)**

Forklifts, tractors, and all-terrain vehicles pose dangers for many young workers. 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. (December 2007)

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. (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.

(Summer 2004).

A 13-year-old Arkansas youth died when the ATV he was driving tipped over on a levee

between catfish ponds. The minor was pinned under the water and drowned. (March

2003).

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.

**Restaurants, Grocery Stores & 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, 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.

**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.

**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 —

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.**

<http://nclnet.org/images/PDF/2012_worst_jobs.pdf>