

Common Child Labor Violations

This page provides general information about the common violations of federal child labor provisions found in [all types of businesses](#), as well as [industry-specific common violations](#) of employers employing minors in the following industries:

- Food service and restaurant
- Construction
- Wholesale or manufacturing

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Note: This information covers federal law only. State child labor laws may be more stringent. For more information on state child labor laws, contact your local Department of Labor (DOL).

Common Violations in All Types of Businesses

The following two lists detail the most common employment violations found in all types of businesses employing minors. Violations are divided by age groups:

- [Minors ages 14 and 15](#)
- [Minors ages 16 and 17](#)

Common Employment Violations Involving 14- and 15-Year-Olds

- **Working prohibited hours**

The most frequent child labor violations involve 14- and 15-year-olds working inappropriate hours — either too late at night or too many hours on a school day. Minors ages 14 and 15 may not work as follows:

 - During school hours
 - More than three hours on a school day (School days are generally Monday to Friday.)
 - More than eight hours on a non-school day (Non-school days include Saturday, Sunday, school holidays, and summer recess.)
 - More than 18 hours in a school week (Any day school is in session will make the week a school week.)
 - More than 40 hours in a non-school week
 - Before 7:00 a.m. and after 7:00 p.m. between Labor Day and June 1
 - Before 7:00 a.m. and after 9:00 p.m. between June 1 and Labor Day
- **Operating prohibited power equipment**

Minors ages 14 and 15 are prohibited from operating most types of power equipment. Most frequent violations involve using the following types of equipment:

 - Lawn and garden equipment (i.e., lawnmowers, weed whackers, hedge trimmers, etc.)
 - Kitchen equipment (i.e., food grinders, choppers, mixers and slicers, etc.)
 - Golf carts

- Motorized low-lift hand trucks

Note: Minors may use office machines, cash registers, vacuum cleaners, and certain kitchen equipment such as dishwashers, milk shake blenders, and toasters.

- **Loading and unloading any type of truck whether or not the truck is owned by the employer**
A common violation involves minors helping delivery drivers unload stock.
- **Performing hazardous duties that are prohibited for 16- and 17-year-old employees**

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Common Employment Violations Involving 16- and 17-Year-Olds

- **Operating a motor vehicle**
Even with a valid driver's license, a 16-year-old may not drive for their employer and a 17-year-old may do so only under very limited circumstances.
- **Operating or riding on a non-automatic freight elevator**
(For example, employees of a retail establishment in a mall operating or utilizing a commonly used freight elevator on the premises.)
- **Operating, loading, or unloading most types of scrap paper balers and paper box compactors**
Loading of some balers and compactors is permissible provided that certain safety standards are met.
- **Operating, assembling, or cleaning meat slicers and dough mixers**
- **Operating power saws, nail guns, and power staplers**
This includes circular, band and jig saws, power sanders, and other woodworking equipment.

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Industry-Specific Common Child Labor Violations

In addition to the violations listed above for all types of businesses, additional child labor restrictions apply to the following specific industries:

- [Food service and restaurant](#) (includes grocery stores)
- [Construction](#)
- [Wholesale or manufacturing](#)

Food Service and Restaurant

Violations found quite often in the food service and restaurant industry involving **14- and 15-year-olds** include:

- **Baking (including pizza ovens) and most cooking**
Minors may perform simple cooking functions under specific conditions. These minors may not operate broilers, pressure cookers, ovens or large rotisseries. However, they may cook using only electric or gas grills that do not have open flames, and automated deep fryers. All other restaurant cooking is prohibited.

- **Working in freezers and meat coolers**
Minors may not be employed in positions where their job duties require them to enter and remain in freezers and meat coolers for extended periods of time. This would include stock work and performing inventory or clean up work. On the other hand, minors may perform duties which only require them to enter such areas momentarily if the equipment is designed to prevent them from being locked inside.
- **Performing hazardous duties that are prohibited for 16- and 17-year-old employees**

Common violations made by food service and restaurant employers involving **16- and 17-year-olds** include *operating, adjusting, or cleaning power meat slicers, power dough mixers, fork lifts or high-lift trucks.*

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Construction

Minors ages 14 and 15 may **not** be employed in construction except for performing office or sales-related work where such work is not performed at a construction site.

Common violations often found in the construction industry involving **16- and 17-year-olds** include:

- **Performing work in roofing operations**
This includes all work involving close proximity to roofs, such as air conditioning repair, gutter and down spout maintenance, installation of sheathing, roof trusses or roof bases, television antennas, exhaust and ventilating equipment, heating equipment and similar appliances attached to roofs. This prohibition also includes all jobs on the ground related to roofing operations.
- **Performing most excavation operations**
This applies whether or not the minor is operating the equipment.
- **Operating power saws, nail guns, and power staplers**
This includes circular, band and jig saws, power sanders and other woodworking equipment.
- **Operating fork lifts or high-lift trucks**

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Wholesale or Manufacturing

Minors ages 14 and 15 may **not** be employed in any manufacturing occupation.

Minors ages 14 and 15 may **not** be employed in any occupation in connection with warehousing or transportation (i.e., working in or about any vehicles), except for office and sales-related work performed in the office.

Common violations often found in the wholesale or manufacturing industry involving **16- and 17-year-olds** include operating, adjusting or cleaning specific types of power equipment, whether portable or fixed. This includes a fork lift or high-lift trucks, saws (i.e., circular, band, jig, etc.), woodworking equipment (i.e., power nailers, staplers, sanders, etc.), and metal forming, punching and shearing machines. The most common violation found involves these minors operating fork lifts.

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