

Teen worker education protects against hazards

In her job as a regional community health consultant, Keokuk County resident Berdette Ogden works hard to prevent injuries. But that doesn't make her kids immune to the risk of sustaining injuries, especially at work.

"As a parent of teens, one of the most frustrating things is that sometimes employers forget they have hired teens," Ogden says. "Employers can't take for granted that teens know how to do a job and run equipment."

As teens gear up for summer jobs, local safety advocates can find information for teens, parents, employers and educators from the U.S. Department of Labor's Youth Rules Web site and the newly updated Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Teen Workers Web page. Both sites provide a variety of resources, including common hazards teens encounter, training tools, video clips demonstrating safe work practices, checklists, and links to the rules for teen workers. Iowa-specific information can be found at the Iowa Safe Youth @ Work Web site.

Ogden recalls a job her 17-year-old son Logan had where his boss told him to cut boards on a table saw. "I asked him if the boss showed him how to run the saw, and he said 'No, I was expected to know how, so I just had to figure it out on my own.' Luckily, Logan remembered some of his safety training from shop class."

"I recommend every parent, teen, and employer check out these Web sites to learn more about safety at work," says Kathy Leinenkugel, coordinator for the IDPH Occupational Injury, Illness, & Death Surveillance program. "When I see teen workers in my statistics for work-related fatalities and injuries, I also think of the dreams that are lost, often because no one took the time to think about safety."

For local public health partners, IDPH Bureau of Local Public Health Services Coordinator Judy Naber echoes Leinenkugel's advice. "I think these Web sites



can be used by anyone working in public health as a resource to provide information to employers in their area, for schools to include in mailings to parents and teens, for newsletters or Web sites, and to distribute in public places such as health fairs, medical offices, hospitals, grocery stores, or community offices."

Learn more by visiting Youth Rules Web site at www.youthrules.dol.gov, the Teen Workers Web page at www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers, and the Iowa Safe Youth @ Work Web site at www.iowaworkforce.org/files/safety. You can also contact Kathy Leinenkugel at 515-281-4930.

