

Child Labor Laws

Is Your Minor Working Legally?

BY LISA RISSER
KENNETT SQUARE (Chester)
— "More than half of the serious injuries to children that I see are to relatives of business owners," Joe McKeefrey told farmers. "Children are more likely to get hurt if their parents own the business because not many employees are going to tell the owner's child not to do something."

McKeefrey addressed attendees at the Conference For Employers of Farm Labor this week, discussing child labor laws and the federal Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. McKeefrey, compliance officer with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (DOL), noted "because kids are more likely to get hurt, there are child labor laws. Kids have more of a tendency to do stupid things and get hurt than older people."

Farmers who plan on hiring youth under 16 years of age should contact their local DOL office for information on child labor laws. "We don't expect farmers or any businessman to have these laws memorized," McKeefrey stressed. "But they should give us a call and see if what they plan to have that minor doing is legal."

When considering minor workers, farmers should call their insurance company as well because some will not provide coverage on under-age employees.

Child labor laws are broken down by age and are geared to farm work and non-farm work. Any youth older than 16 years may work on a farm at any time and at any job. Youths 14 or 15 years old may work outside of school on farm jobs not declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. Children 12 or 13 years old may work outside of school on farm jobs not declared hazardous with the written parental consent or if their parents work on that farm. Children under 12 years of age may not work on farms employing workers covered by the minimum wage provisions. On all other farms, they may work in nonhazardous jobs outside school hours with written parental consent.

For children 10 to 11 years old, they may work at hand harvesting jobs of short-season crops outside of school hours for no more than eight weeks between June 1 and October 15 if their employers have special waivers from the Secretary of Labor.

In addition, youth of any age

may work at any time on any farm job if their parents own or operate the farm. "But I would recommend against it," McKeefrey stated. "I've seen too many serious injuries on children. I know what I'm talking about because I was raised on a horse farm and my father wouldn't let me do many things while I was young. I still have all my fingers and some of my neighbors don't. Kids aren't as careful as adults."

There are many farm activities that are considered hazardous. Some of them include operating a tractor over 22 PTO, connecting or disconnecting implements from the tractor, operating many field implements such as grain harvesters or hay mowers, operating earth movers, being in a pen or yard with a bull, boar, stud horse, sow suckling piglets, or cow with calf, and using a ladder or scaffold higher than 20 feet. More specific information can be obtained at DOL.

There are some exemptions from the prohibitions on hazardous jobs, farmers should contact DOL for details.

The requirements for youths working on non-farm jobs are more stringent and there are

hazardous jobs limiting 16 and 17 year olds. In addition, there is a limit on the number of hours children under 16 years are allowed to work.

Violations of child labor laws mean a \$1,000 fine in addition to remorse for the accident. Employ-

ers also could be in line for a lawsuit from the injured child's parents.

There are many jobs on a farm that children can perform and perform in safety. It is up to the farmer to find out which they can do.

Pennsylvania Corn Tests Free Of Aflatoxin

HARRISBURG — State Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff said that testing has shown Pennsylvania-grown corn was virtually free of aflatoxin, a mold that attacks corn and is a danger primarily to livestock.

"The testing results indicate that corn grown in Pennsylvania is safe for human and livestock consumption," Wolff said. "The level of aflatoxin appears no higher than what might be expected in a normal year."

The State Agriculture Department ordered the tests last fall after high levels of aflatoxin were detected in corn grown in mid-western states. Tests of 126 samples of shelled corn in Pennsylvania uncovered contamination

above acceptable levels in only one sample. That corn will not be used.


Aflatoxin, produced by a mold that thrives on drought-stressed plants, is poisonous to cattle in large doses and is suspected of causing liver cancer in humans. In Pennsylvania, aflatoxin would be mainly a danger to livestock, since virtually all of the corn grown in the state is used to feed livestock and is not processed for human consumption.

Wolff said the tests, conducted on corn samples obtained statewide, showed no aflatoxin in 113 instances, less than 20 parts per billion (ppb) in 12 instances; and one sample of 80 ppb. Corn with less than 20 ppb of aflatoxin is not restricted in use.

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