

International
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Safe Work for Youth Kit

**TIPS FOR
OWNERS & MANAGERS OF
GARMENT FACTORIES
WITH YOUNG WORKERS
IN MYANMAR**

2019

KEEP THEM SAFE



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TIPS FOR **OWNERS & MANAGERS OF GARMENT FACTORIES** WITH YOUNG WORKERS **IN MYANMAR**

2019

This booklet is for owners, managers and supervisors of garment factories where young workers are employed, especially those between 14 and 18 years old. It describes what you need to know when hiring and managing younger workers and how to improve the work site so it is profitable, productive and safe.

Fundamental Principles and Right at Work (FUNDAMENTALS)
International Labour Organization (ILO)



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GENERAL GUIDELINES





THE FUTURE IS NOW!

Myanmar's garment sector will experience exponential growth in the next few years. Estimates are that it will generate US\$12 billion in export value by 2020 and create around 1.5 million new jobs. You will have an opportunity to employ many young workers in of these jobs. Because of their education and energy, young workers can play a key role in putting Myanmar's garment industry on the map.

Young workers are a great asset to the growth of the garment industry because they:

- learn fast and are anxious to do well
- appreciate the chance to learn new skills
- are enthusiastic and energetic with a great work ethic
- have good eyesight and hearing
- may have important ideas for improving the workplace to make it safer, more efficient and more productive
- are adaptable and flexible, often able to work part-time or on weekends or outside school hours when you do not require a full time worker
- likely have gone to school and are literate and numerate

WHO ARE YOUNG WORKERS?

According to Myanmar law, which is in accordance with international labour standards, young workers are those young people who are over age 14. The upper age limit is not defined in law but generally considered to be age 18. Therefore, it is legal and accepted internationally for you to employ young people in this age range.

Question:

OK, I agree it is good to hire young workers but I don't want my buyers to accuse me of using child labour.

Answer:

You have the right to hire someone who is over the minimum age for employment – in almost all countries, this is age 14 or 15, unless the work is hazardous. If the work or the working conditions are hazardous, then the employee must be at least age 18.



KEY FACTS ABOUT YOUNG WORKERS

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION ARE CRUCIAL. Young workers become safe and successful employees if they are

- Given clear instructions, are observed doing the task, and have their mistakes, if any, pointed out
- Properly supervised and monitored
- Shown, not just told what to do. Young workers learn best by observing
- Supported by good role models. Make sure that adult workers and, above all, supervisors, set a good example
- Spoken to respectfully and encouragingly

THEY DESERVE CARE. Young workers should be given special consideration because they are more vulnerable. Young workers are:

- still growing and their organs, muscles, and bones are still developing
- more sensitive to exposure to chemicals, toxic fumes, or noise than adults
- quick to move — sometimes without thinking — and more likely not to fully appreciate workplace risks
- less experienced and may not yet have the judgement for tasks that require careful critical thinking.
- bored more easily and may let their attention wander

Young workers may look like adults on the outside but on the inside, both physically and emotionally, they are not yet fully mature. They want to please and do not want to appear stupid. As a result they may take on job tasks they do not really know how to do, or let other workers talk them into doing things they have not yet been trained for.

Although generally strong, smart and eager, young workers must be kept away from jobs or activities where they will be placed at risk.

THEY ARE NOT MACHINES! Consider the young worker as a “whole person”. Pay attention to ...

- whether the young worker has completed compulsory schooling, has a school certificate and has learned to read, write, and do arithmetic well.
- how the young worker behaves and seems to feel: focused? attentive? anxious? sad? shy?
- signs that the young worker does not have enough food, sleep, clothing or housing.
- what the young worker wants to learn and what are her/his hopes for the future.



If something is lacking in one of these areas, the employer or supervisor can often provide or direct the young person to the kind of help that will set him or her on the right track for the future.

WHO ARE CHILD LABOURERS?

The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA) has committed itself to making the Myanmar garment industry child-labour-free. It knows that international consumers do not want to buy clothing that has been made by children in sweat shops. So it is good to be clear about what is and is not child labour.

For a start, child labour is work by children who are below minimum working age, i.e. in Myanmar this is age 14. As noted above, for hazardous work (e.g. working with powered equipment, transporting heavy loads, or being exposed to hazardous chemicals) the age limit is 18. This seems like an easy rule but there are three challenges:

- **Subcontractors.** For those who work outside the factory building as suppliers or subcontractors, it is hard to know who is actually doing the work. It is becoming increasingly necessary for a garment company to monitor the work being done in homes and other informal working places prior to the product entering the workplace to ensure that children are not being drawn away from school and into work.
- **Child care.** In the past, mothers sometimes brought their little children along with them to the factory if there was no one at home to care for them properly. This challenge can be handled satisfactorily with a child care center on the factory premises; this ensures that children are safe but not exposed to any risks from the operational activity.
- **Birth records.** It is not easy to see whether a young worker is above or below minimum age for work if she/he has no birth certificate. However, there are some accepted ways that other factories have used to document age (see Fact Sheet: Age Determination).

Some garment factory owners say they do not want to take the risk and decide to only hire adults, but this is unfortunate both for the enterprise and for the country. In Myanmar, the median age is 27, approximately 55% of the population is under the age of 30, and those aged 15–29 account for about one-quarter of the population. That is approximately 1.3 million young people ready for work!



KEY FACTS ABOUT HAZARDOUS WORK

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), adopted by most countries including Myanmar, it is: "...work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children". Young workers should therefore not be allowed to do these tasks if they are below 18 years of age. Hazardous work includes:

- ➔ **lifting, pushing or pulling heavy items or carrying excessively heavy loads**
- ➔ **operating or working close to heavy or hazardous machinery**
 - equipment that cuts or crushes
 - powered equipment
 - machines with entrapment points
- ➔ **working for excessive hours or at night**
- ➔ **working with hazardous chemicals or potential exposure to hazardous substances including dusts, fume, or biological hazards**
- ➔ **working in places where there is a risk of violence going to and from work**
- ➔ **working with inappropriate responsibility for others' safety or goods**
- ➔ **working at heights (roofs, walls) or from equipment where they might fall (ladders, scaffolding, steep slopes)**
- ➔ **working alone, unsupervised, away from others, or isolated from other young people**

The items marked in red are those which sometimes occur in garment factories. However, most tasks in the industry can be done by young workers. The challenge is to know where to draw the line so that young workers are fully protected. This booklet will help you do this in ways that make good business sense.



KEY FACTS ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY OF YOUTH

Workplace accidents, incidents and ill-health can have tragic consequences for young workers and their families. They can also have a negative impact on your company, due to a damaged reputation, lost profits, worker absenteeism, skilled workers leaving to work for another company, reduced productivity, medical costs, and loss of customers.

Safe workplaces are more efficient, more productive, less likely to lose staff at crucial times and are a valued part of the community. As an employer, it is worth it to make sure that your factory is safe for all your workers. A workplace made safe for young workers is one that is safe for all!

FOUR GOLDEN RULES

1

Know the legal age for regular work. In Myanmar, it is 14 years. Do not let anyone below that age work or even be present in the factory! Monitor your subcontractors to be sure children are in school and not “helping out” with the work.

2

Give every young worker a work contract. A written and signed contract – even for part-time or single day workers. This protects you, as well as your young workers and helps avoid misunderstandings by making the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers clear.

3

Train and supervise. It is your obligation to teach young workers what they need to know to do the job well, and how to keep safe while doing it. All young workers, including apprentices and trainees, must work under appropriate supervision.

4

Do not let anyone under 18 do hazardous work. If the working conditions or the work itself is hazardous, adults must do it. Ensure that young workers are not exposed to dangerous workplace hazards and risks that could cause illness or injury.

Because there are advantages to hiring young workers, you will want to use them to best advantage. You want to assign them tasks which draw on their strengths. But young workers need to be protected from work situations for which they are not ready. Whether you have young workers in an apprenticeship or at legal working age doing regular work, this booklet will tell you what you need to know about how to protect your young workers. ¹

¹ The content of the Safe Work for Youth materials was prepared by international health and safety professionals but as no document can cover all circumstances, the user must take responsibility for applying this information.



Most important: The tips in this booklet are not just good for young workers; they are good for all workers, and for your business. It has been proven time and time again that the simple suggestions given here can help to transform a business in many positive ways. Your factory will not only become a safer and more pleasant place to work, it can become more profitable. Equipping a young worker for the future will yield rewards many times over, because a worker you train well will know your business. There is no better way to build loyalty and trust. Invest in the future. Invest in a young worker!

Read through this booklet, and see what makes sense to you. Then set up a plan to make step-by-step changes in your own factory or work site. We suggest doing a “walk-through” of the workplace periodically using the checklist.



EXERCISE: Put a circle around all the hazards you can find in this drawing. Put a double circle around those which are especially hazardous and which you should take action on immediately.



WORKING WITH YOUNG WORKERS: THE BASICS

If you have read this far, it shows you are a responsible employer who wants to operate a legal and safe factory that anyone will recognize as a good place for young people to work. This reputation will help you attract buyers for well-known brands and help you keep good workers.

You will become known as a good garment manufacturing company and be more competitive through efficiency, good quality work, and reduced accidents lost-time incidents or damage. The ideas and solutions provided in this booklet are proven effective; they have been developed and tested time and time again in thousands of factories just like yours.

The following section outlines general rules to follow if you have young people working in your factory.

1: MAKE IT “OK” TO ASK QUESTIONS

Young workers need guidance, especially at the beginning, but are often too shy to ask questions. Respectful of authority, they may be reluctant to speak directly to you. Above all, they don't want to lose their job by saying something wrong. However, injuries and mistakes of young people occur when they are not sure of how to do the job right. If they try to figure it out on their own, without proper guidance, they can easily suffer harm. The best way to prevent this from happening is to make it “OK” to ask questions. Another way is to assign each of the young workers to a competent supervisor who will pay close attention to them. Make sure this person feels comfortable with young people and will encourage them to speak frankly and to raise any concerns they might have. Make sure the supervisor knows which tasks are OK and which are “off limits” or prohibited for young workers.

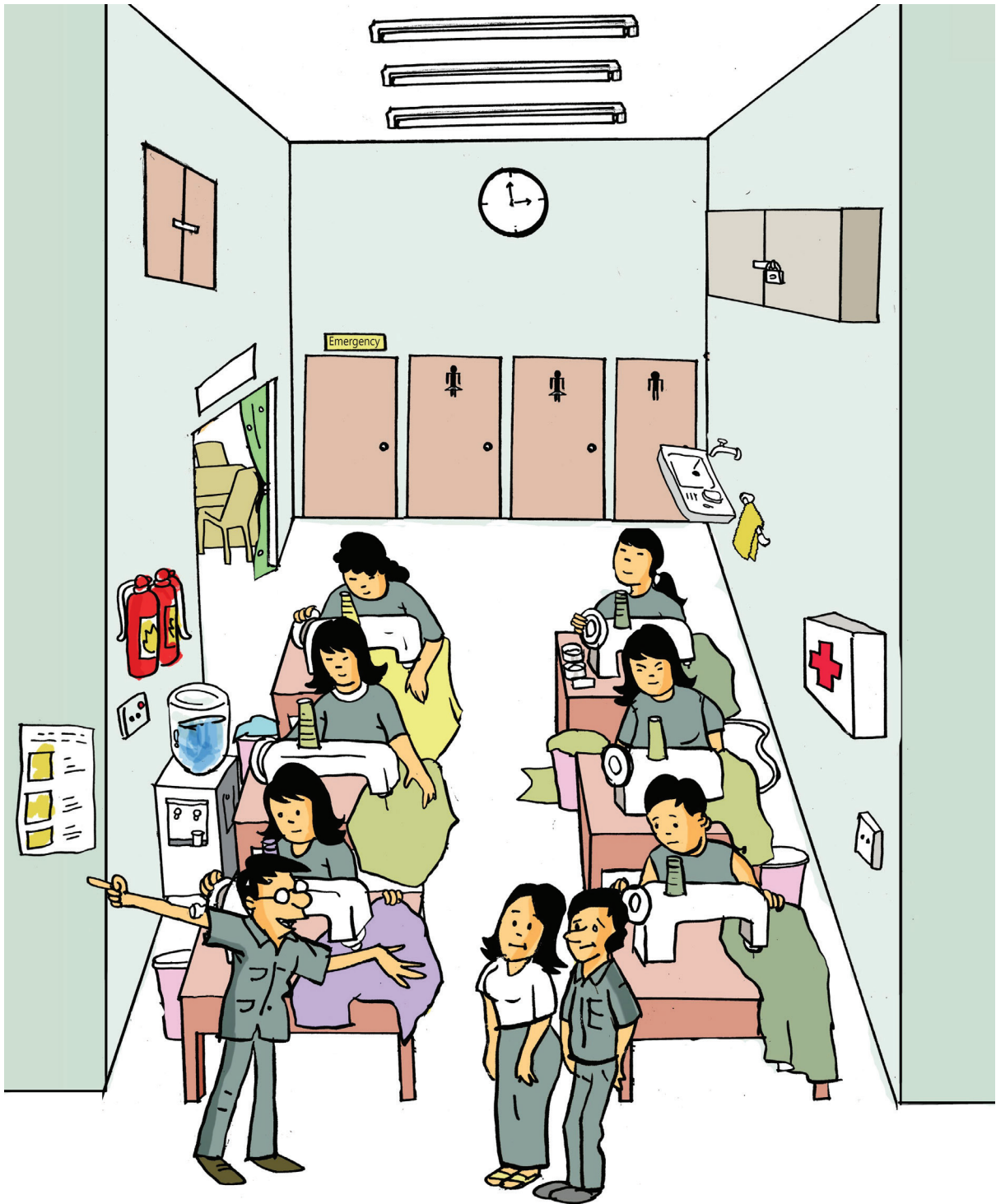
2: MAKE IT A “FEMALE-FRIENDLY FACTORY”

Because of the high proportion of young women in the garment industry, the workplace and the work should be organized so female workers can be safe and efficient. You need to consider the height and configuration of workstations, storage and shelving; the loads which workers are asked to carry or move; and the provision of rest and comfort facilities. On-site child care arrangements are a must and a private space for breast-feeding or rest is especially appreciated. From the standpoint of safety, all young women in the workforce should have training on manual handling techniques, and the importance of avoiding contact with chemicals that could present a health risk, including reproductive risk. Factory-provided uniforms are a safer alternative to loose and flowing traditional dress as uniforms minimize the hazards of entanglement in machinery. It is also helpful to have female managers and supervisors; a female worker representative is also especially valuable in communicating the specific concerns of the female workforce.



3: MAKE IT SAFE FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Don't wait to be inspected. Make sure you know the hazards and risks in all work activities and work areas in your factory – from the standpoint of young workers. If young workers are safe, all workers will be safe. Let both young and older workers help you identify hazards and suggest solutions; they are an ideal source of information because they experience the hazards on a daily basis. Ideally, worker inputs should be handled through a joint safety and health committee. Be sure that the first aid box, fire extinguishers, and other emergency devices are ready to use and that young workers know where they are and are trained to properly use them. Prepare your workers for all kinds of safety emergencies: accidents, fires, violent situations, etc. Train them to safely use the escape routes and explain where to go if they need medical treatment. Demonstrate the safety precautions for each task. While physical safety is important, be sure to also consider psycho-social well-being; many work situations can lead to fatigue, stress, or harassment and have an adverse effect on the safety and health of workers and their productivity.





SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS



The following section looks at a few ways you can improve protection for young workers. These approaches will have the added benefit of improving productivity and efficiency. The most important areas of action are presented first.



WORK CONTRACTS

- ✓ Do sign a written contract with young workers – even if they are subcontractors, short-term or just filling in -- and make sure they clearly understand its terms
- ✓ Do give them the same benefits as adult workers (e.g. daily rest breaks, vacation, sick leave, or maternity leave)
- ✓ Do follow proper procedures if the young worker needs to be dismissed

A contract clarifies important rights and responsibilities and helps avoid misunderstandings. Never rely on a verbal agreement, which can lead to confusion over what you have said and agreed to. A written contract reduces chances for conflict in the future for both you and your young workers. Without it, if a dispute arises you may end up spending a lot of time and money solving an easily avoidable problem.

INFORM YOUNG WORKERS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TIP

Young workers have important rights under Myanmar law. They are eligible for the same benefits that all other workers get, such as regular rest breaks, holidays, and medical care. Make sure that all young workers know this. At the same time, make sure they know exactly what they or their families are expected to pay for, if anything. Young workers or their families should NOT be made to pay for personal protective clothing or equipment — that is always the employer’s responsibility.

Note: Some employers try to save on costs by providing their workers with cheap personal protective equipment and clothing. However, think of the example this sets: it sends the message that the employer prefers to save on costs rather than to invest in safety. If you provide faulty protective equipment, your workers will either have to buy their own PPE, or go without. Neither of these outcomes is acceptable under the law.

PAY YOUNG WORKERS PROMPTLY

TIP

When young workers are paid on time, it contributes to a positive relationship between employer and employee and an overall positive atmosphere in the factory. Young workers may be especially dependent on their pay because of school expenses and providing support for other family members. It will enhance production as no time will be wasted in following up on the salary and other allowances.



Comment: My production line has to be flexible because I am producing fashionable clothing, so it doesn't make sense for me to be tied down with bureaucratic paperwork and requirements.

Response: A simple contract that outlines wages and hours won't keep you from shifting tasks as the occasion demands. It will save you time in the long run because you will already have all the information you need in your files.

KEY POINTS IN A YOUNG WORKER CONTRACT

1. Info about the worker

- Name
- Age
- Contact information for parents/guardian
- Home address

2. Info about the firm

- Name of the company or factory
- Contact information for the company

3. Info about the work

- Tasks to be done
- Name of supervisor

4. Info about the contract

- Start date and duration (or end date, if time-limited)
- Days per week and hours of work per day
- Amount of pay and when it will be paid
- Other benefits, leave, holidays, bonuses, etc.



WORK TIME & HOURS

- ✓ **Do not allow young workers to work overtime**
- ✓ **Do make sure young workers take adequate lunch breaks and rest breaks**
- ✓ **Do not let young workers work at night or travel home after dark**

Garment factories work against tight deadlines. Orders come in with short turn-around period, and the manager has to fill the orders or risk losing future work. As a result, long working hours is a major safety issue facing workers in the garment industry. It also leads to many other potential issues.

NO LONG HOURS; NO OVERTIME

TIP

Do not let young people work more than 8 hours in a shift. Although many young workers are willing to sign up for extra work in the hope of getting overtime pay, do not allow this. Long hours can make even the simplest work much more hazardous. Experience shows that letting young workers work more than 8 hours, or making them return to work without at least eight hours of sleep will reduce quality and increase the number of mistakes and injuries. Mistakes and injuries cost money and cause delays!

Adolescents require more sleep than adults, and as much or more sleep than younger children. Working at night poses additional safety risks, particularly for girls. As an employer, your responsibility for your workers does not end at the door of the factory. You need to make sure that young workers can reach home safely after work by sending them home before dark.

TOTAL HOURS = WORK+CHORES+SCHOOL

TIP

Many young workers – especially girls – often have a second “job” at home in the form of domestic tasks such as child care, cooking, shopping, or running errands. They may also be going to school. Garment work + home-based chores + school work adds up to a long day. When all these additional hours are combined, young workers can become chronically fatigued, which places them at increased risk for mistakes, injuries and illnesses. Worker fatigue harms the productivity of your operation.

During the workday, rest breaks and a good lunch break can help to reduce fatigue. Be sure young workers fill in a time log each day and monitor it to ensure they are not at increased risk.



REAL STORY

“According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Asia alone accounts for 58.4% of world clothing and textile exports. More than 70% of EU imports of textiles and clothing come from Asia. The customers of garment producers are most often global brands looking for low prices and tight production timeframes. They also make changes to product design, product volume, and production timeframes, and place last-minute orders without accepting increased costs or adjustments to delivery dates. The stresses of such policies usually fall on factory workers.” “At present, brands have to deal with the expectations of consumers primarily focused on cheap prices and buying fast fashion.”

In an attempt to get new orders in a highly competitive environment, garment manufacturers in one Asian country have been agreeing to unrealistic deadlines. The result is unsustainable pressure and stress on both management and workers.



HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- ✓ Be informed about any hazardous textile chemicals and their health effects
- ✓ Don't allow young workers to mix, handle, use or dispose of hazardous chemicals
- ✓ Do train young workers on any risks associated with cleaning and how that risk must be reduced

It is easy to say that young workers should not work with hazardous chemicals, but in the garment industry the chemicals are not so obvious. They may already be in the fabric. They may be released by ironing or washing. They may be added during finishing. Because of this, young workers – especially young women – need to know about chemicals and how to avoid exposure to those known to be hazardous to their health.

KNOW WHAT IS IN AND ON THE CLOTH; KNOW BOTH THE HAZARD AND THE RISKS

TIP

Chemical dyes have increasingly taken the place of the vegetal textile dyes that have been used for thousands of years. In addition, today's fabrics have chemicals added to make the cloth resistant to insects, stains, or wrinkles, or to give garments certain characteristics such as being rain- or fire-resistant. Textile producers are constantly exploring new technologies and new products are frequently introduced to respond to consumer demands. One cannot assume that old dyes were safe, nor are the risks for new ones fully known. Myanmar's garment sector is developing rapidly and its workers will increasingly be exposed to chemical products which may be hazardous to their health.

LABEL ALL CHEMICAL CONTAINERS AND STORE THEM SECURELY IN ONE PLACE







TIP

Chemicals are expensive so don't risk economic losses due to improper storage, handling or use. Keep them in a locked cabinet or special purpose room. Place warning signs where hazardous substances are used and have an eyewash station -- plastic squeeze bottles filled with clean water, or a source of clean running water -- close by so that workers can flush their eyes if splashed with a chemical. Or, supply face shields to protect against the risk.

Make sure that all containers with chemicals in them have a label with the technical name and a pictorial symbol indicating how hazardous it is in case some workers cannot read the language the label is printed in. Have Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each chemical that you use and train young workers how to understand them. SDS explains the chemical, its proper use and precautions. Does it cause fire or explosion? Can it be absorbed through the skin? Is it dangerous for young women who are or might become pregnant? Is personal protective equipment required? What do you do if it gets on the skin, in the eyes, is spilled or is involved in a fire? Remember, if the chemical safety data sheet says the material is hazardous, it is "off limits" or prohibited for young workers; they should not use the chemical nor should they be asked to dispose of empty chemical containers. Never re-use hazardous chemical containers for anything else!

CHEMICALS COMMONLY FOUND IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

- Formaldehyde, used in permanent press garments and wrinkle resistant cloth, can cause irritation to lungs and skin, and is potentially carcinogenic.
- Phthalates, used to soften plasticized clothing such as gloves and rain gear, have been suspected to be biocumulative, and to have negative effects on liver, kidney and reproductive systems.
- Organotins, used as a biocide in textile production, appear to be endocrine disrupters
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), used in certain colours of printing ink on clothing, can affect the immune, reproductive, nervous, and endocrine systems and are potentially carcinogenic.
- Nonylphenols, used in compounds to apply dyes and in other garment and textile production processes, is another class of endocrine disrupters.
- Trichloroethylene, used for dry cleaning, is a class of solvents with numerous adverse health effects ranging from skin irritation to cancer.
- Nanosilver, used to inhibit odour-causing bacteria (in socks for example), has not yet been determined to have a health impact, but there are some concerns.
- Highly fluorinated compounds, used to make durable waterproof finishes, such as those on rain jackets are associated with adverse neurological, endocrine and other health effects.

	Acute Toxicity: poisons by inhalation, ingestion or skin exposure; may be fatal or rapidly toxic
	Corrosive: to the skin (severe burns), to the eye (damage), and corrosive to metals
	Moderate Health Hazards: Irritation of the skin or eyes; skin sensitizer (allergic reaction); nervous system effects such as drowsiness or dizziness (generally reversible, not severe)
	Serious Health Hazards: Cancer, Reproductive Toxicity, Respiratory Sensitization (Asthma), Target Organ Toxicity (Liver, Kidneys, Nervous System, Lungs), Aspiration Hazard
	Flammable liquids, solids and gases; including pyrophorics (ignite on contact with air), some self-reactive chemicals and chemicals that release flammable gases (hydrogen)
	Gases under Pressure: compressed gases (cylinders) and liquefied gases (such as LNG fuel)
Instruct young workers as to the meaning of these symbols; make sure these are included on container labels.	



DON'T FORGET CLEANING MATERIALS

TIP

Where young people are concerned, it is so easy to think only about the main job they do or what they were hired for. But a lot of the time young people are given extra jobs, 'one-time' jobs, or temporary tasks that everyone (including the young workers) forgets about. These tasks are usually simple and it is assumed that little or no training is needed and so usually no training is given. Examples of this kind of work are: sweeping, cleaning the sewing equipment, cleaning the sanitary facilities, running errands, bringing someone a tool, piece of equipment or product that they need. What's wrong with this?

- Sweeping up may expose the young person to high levels of fine dusts which include cotton fibre, lint, silica sand, and other particulates. Moisten the floor first so that the dust doesn't fly around ...or use a vacuum with a high efficiency particulate filter.
- Cleaning equipment may mean working with solvents, which may be harmful to the skin or by inhalation to the lungs. Make sure you know what chemicals are used in any cleaning liquids.
- Cleaning toilets and other facilities may expose a young person to biological agents, and require contact with hazardous cleaning agents, some of which may have been mixed in unmarked containers or in bottles with incomprehensible labels. Appropriate gloves and smocks should be provided for the chemicals used, in a size that fits their smaller bodies.
- Running errands may literally mean running, which increases fatigue and heat exposure, or requires carrying loads that are too heavy, or contact with items which the young person should not have, such as containers of hazardous chemicals.

Young people need training on all the tasks they do, not just the main ones, and this is why having a competent supervisor who oversees their assignments is so important.



SAFETY DATA Sheet

Clean it

Date of issue: June 2015

1. Identification of the substance/mixture and of the company/undertaking

- 1.1 Product identifier:
- 1.2 Relevant identified uses of the substance or mixture and uses advised against:
- 1.3 Details of the supplier of the safety data sheet:
- 1.4 Emergency telephone number

2. Hazards Identification

- 2.1 Classification of the mixture:
- 2.2 Label elements:
- 2.3 Other Hazards

3. Composition/Information on ingredients

Name	EC No.	CAS No.	Content	Classification

4. First Aid Measures

- 4.1 Description of First Aid Measures:
- 4.2 Most Important symptoms and effects, both acute and delayed:
- 4.3 Indication of any immediate medical attention and special treatment needed:

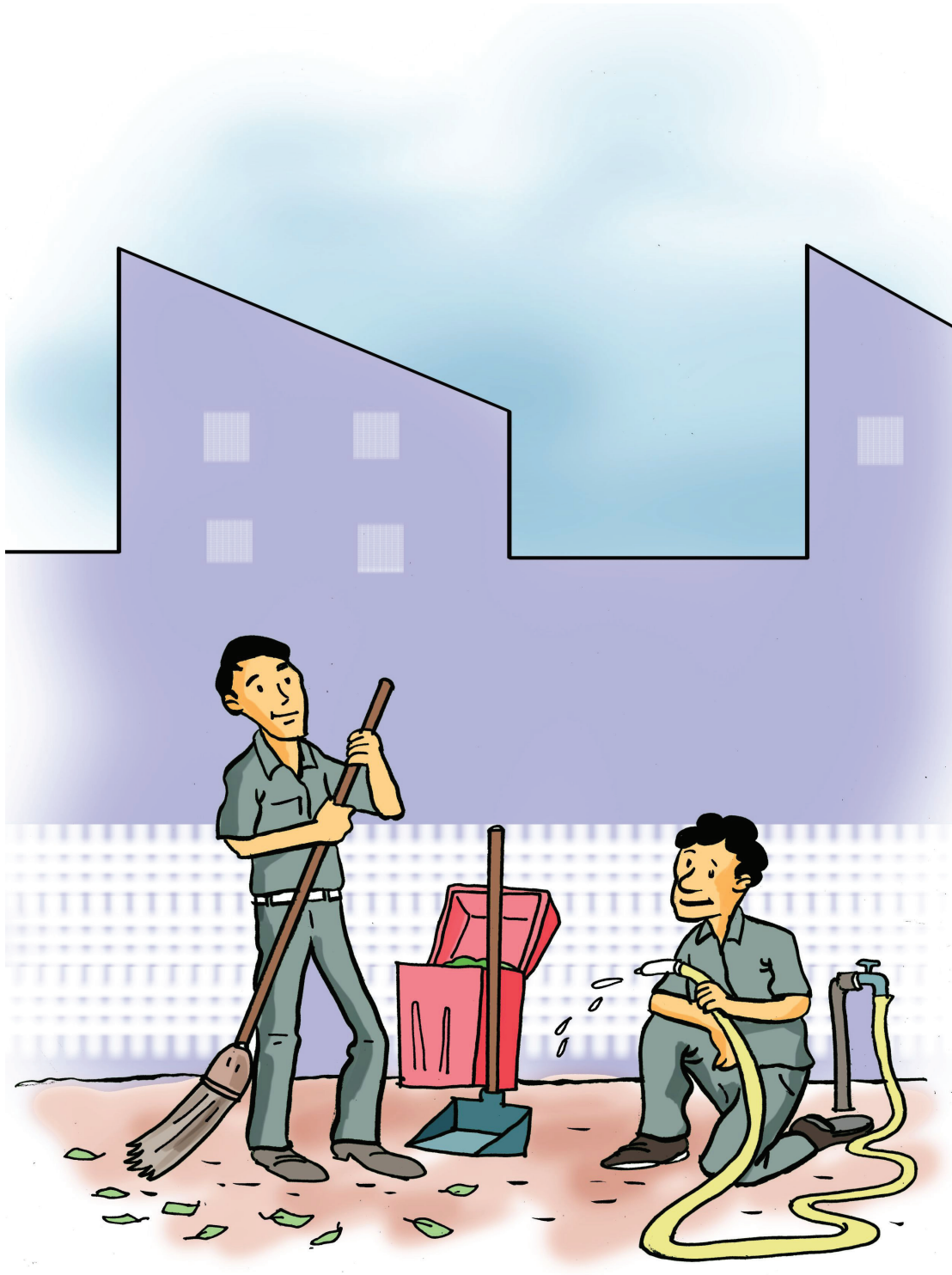
5. Fire-Fighting Measures

- 5.1 Extinguishing Media
- 5.2 Special Hazards arising from the substance or mixture
- 5.3 Advice for Fire Fighters

IF YOU CAN SEE DUST IN THE AIR, IT IS A HAZARDOUS WORKPLACE

TIP

However, some levels of hazardous dusts, vapours and fumes are too high even when you cannot see them. Garment factories produce lint or fluff, which when inhaled can create long term respiratory problems. Another type of dust is that which is generated by operations on the garment such as sand blasting to create a weathered look in jeans. Sand with crystalline silica in it is especially dangerous for young workers and can cause permanent damage to the lungs known as “silicosis”.



WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE MORE VULNERABLE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS?

- In a young person, the elimination of hazardous substances is less efficient because the gastro-intestinal and endocrine systems and renal (kidney) function are still maturing. Exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace can hinder the process of growth.
- Detoxification from exposure to hazardous substances is less effective because the enzyme or immune system is less mature.
- Absorption of hazardous chemicals through the skin is higher among young workers than in adults because most of the cells in their organs and tissues are smaller, their skin area is as much as 2.5 times greater than that of an adult (per unit of body weight) and their skin is thinner. Skin structure is only fully developed after puberty.
- Absorption of hazardous substances through respiration (breathing) is higher among young workers than in adults because they have a higher metabolic rate and oxygen consumption and therefore greater intake of air per unit of body weight. They also breathe faster and more deeply.
- Young people consume more energy than adults as they are still growing and are often more active. With increased energy requirements come an increased susceptibility to hazardous substances
- Metals are retained in the brain more readily in childhood than in adulthood and absorption is greater (lead and methyl mercury).

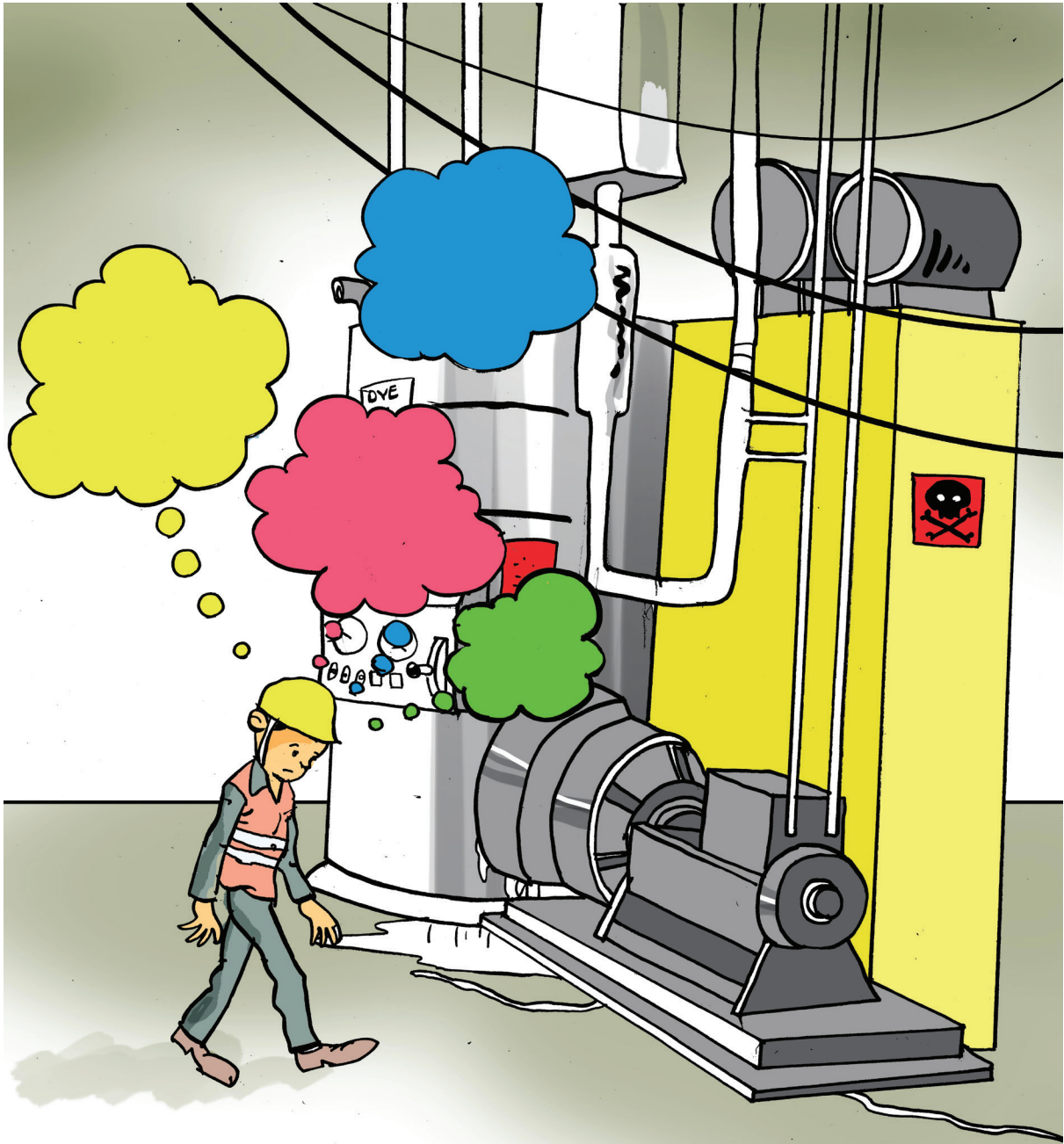


PROTECT AGAINST FIRE

TIP

Fires in textile and garment factories have given the industry a bad name for safety. The loss of life and property in factory fires has been exceptionally high in this industry mainly because common sense safety rules were not followed. Don't let this happen to you. Rules include:

- 1 No smoking within the workplace.
- 2 Emergency exits ALWAYS unlocked and clearly marked.
- 3 Enough emergency exits for the size of the workforce in the factory.
- 4 Emergency exits easily accessible – no furniture, machines, boxes, piles of cloth -- are ever placed in the way or against the exit, even temporarily. Workstations are arranged so that there is a clear and unobstructed path to the nearest exit for all workers.
- 5 No bars on the windows.
- 6 Fire extinguishers within all work areas. Extra fire extinguishers are in the ironing area.
- 7 Fire extinguishers have been checked routinely, are not out of date and are appropriate to the fire risk.
- 8 All workers know where the fire extinguishers are and how to effectively operate them.
- 9 Areas with stoves, hotplates or kettles are properly segregated from the production areas. There is a fire extinguisher provided in cooking areas.





WORKPLACE DESIGN

- ✓ **Make sure the workstation is appropriate for the young worker – working height, machine guarding, etc.**
- ✓ **Give young workers space and time to move around and change position**
- ✓ **Avoid fast-paced repetitive work without a break**

Most kinds of factory work require doing the same tasks over and over, but the pace of the work and the position of the worker's body will determine to a large extent how much stress the young worker will experience. As for all workers, but especially for them, it is important to design the workstation with both workers and tasks in mind so that work is done smoothly. If they are comfortable and at ease, productivity will be higher and quality will be better. This is particularly important if there is a mix of both young workers — particularly girls — and adult workers of different sizes and strengths.

The two tips below can help you raise productivity through better workstation design. In each case, you should be able to design improvements in your own factory observing, talking to the workers, and using your own common sense. The cost of such improvements is usually low; but the benefits are proven to be quite high.

KEEP MATERIALS, TOOLS AND CONTROLS WITHIN ARM'S LENGTH

TIP

Time and effort are saved if the worker does not have to get up or reach. Long reaches or twisting the torso mean a loss of production time and extra effort. The rule is to keep all objects the worker will use within the area that she/he can reach easily without leaning forward, twisting or stretching. This area is quite small especially for young workers.

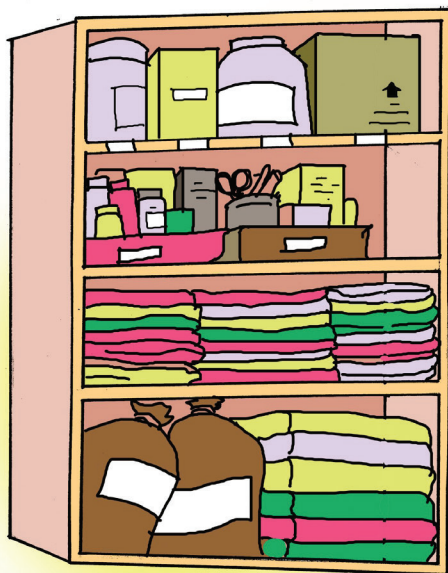
When young people are working in an awkward position, they take longer to do the work and they get tired more quickly. For example, shoulder muscles tire rapidly when the person has to reach and lift. The back is strained when the body must bend forward or twist. The longer someone tries to work in an awkward position, the longer the operation will take, and the more likely it is that there will be accidents or lost time incidents. Try the following ideas to improve work positions:

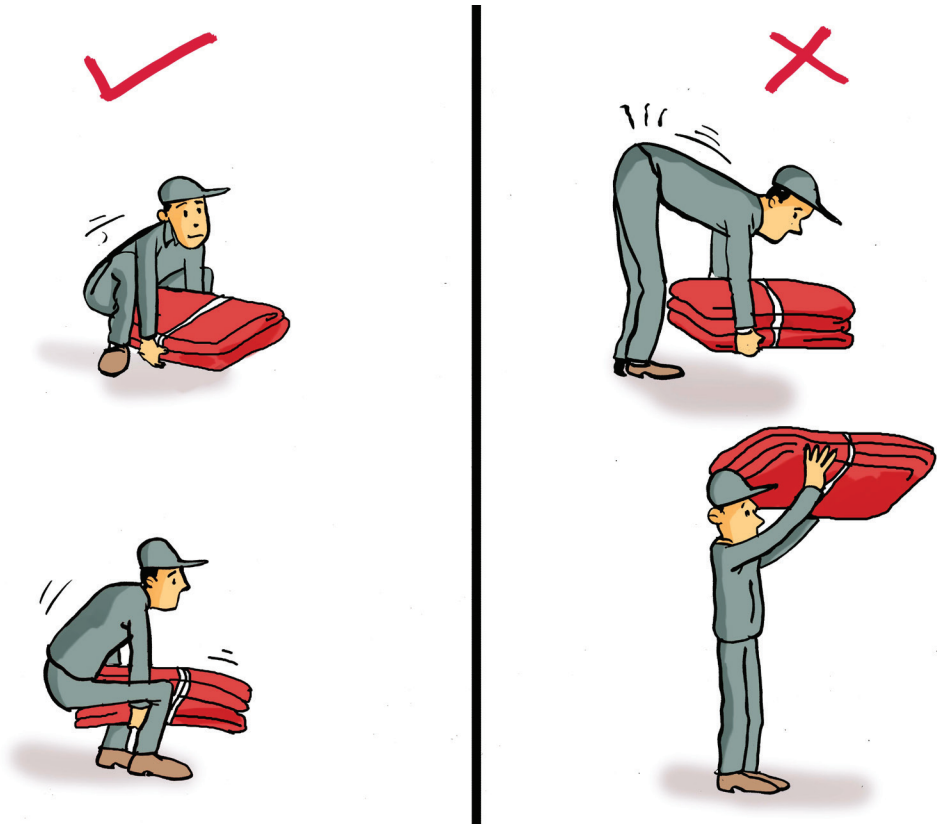
- Provide a strong, flat and stable work surface on which work items can be placed
- Place tools and controls so they can be reached without reaching, bending or twisting the body

- Put a platform under the chair or feet of short workers
- Provide seating that is the right height in relation to the sewing machine or work table and has a sturdy backrest
- Provide enough space for the worker to move legs around easily

It is common in many factories for young workers to squat, kneel or sit cross-legged to work, but they get tired less quickly if they have a proper chair. Providing a simple stool and table set-up is a cheap way to fight fatigue and discomfort in garment work. Remember, if young workers are working in one spot for hours, make sure they take regular rest breaks to get up and move around.

The height of the work surface is also important. According to the “elbow rule”, the correct hand height for working is when the lower arm is at right angles to the upper arm, in other words, when the hand is level with the elbow. For standing work, the hand height may be a little lower than elbow level and when very strong force is needed, a bit lower still so as to use the weight of the body. The height of the work surface or seat should be adjusted to the size of each worker. Adjustments can be made by placing wooden platforms or stands under tables, work surfaces or work items. Platforms are particularly useful for young workers who tend to be shorter than adults. Ensure they are of adequate size, with edge protection of required so as not to create a fall hazard.





SAFETY

- ✓ **Do keep the floor and walkways clear of trip hazards such as cloth and cords**
- ✓ **Do maintain electrical equipment in good repair; check it frequently**
- ✓ **Do train young workers to use machines and tools safely**

Garment factories often have limited space. The sewing and cutting machines themselves take up a lot of room, so there is even less room to put the fabric and the finished goods without cramping the space the workers need in order to work efficiently.

TIP **IF IN DOUBT, TAKE IT OUT**

One way to increase efficiency is to not let waste or unused materials accumulate. Take it away! Otherwise, it creates tripping hazards and reduces the space available to move around. The more cluttered your factory is, the more likely it is that fabric or finished goods will be soiled or damaged, or that small tools will be lost, or accidents or lost time incidents will occur. Workers will waste valuable time looking for things. It sounds simple, but many businesses like yours have found that just improving housekeeping on the factory floor dramatically improves productivity and worker morale.

Young workers need to be trained on good housekeeping procedures as soon as they are hired so that it becomes a habit. Tell them to look at each item, and ask themselves: Is it still needed? If the answer is “no”, then take it away.

TIP **HAVE GOOD HOUSEKEEPING**

But where do you put materials that are not being used? The first rule is NOT to put them on the floor. They take up space. And they also create an obstacle course, as workers try to walk around and over them, reducing efficiency. Or worse, things on the ground lead to injuries when workers trip over them. They are a hazard to all workers, not just the younger ones.

Factory owners often complain about the lack of storage space. When you add together all of the wall and ceiling area, it is many times greater than the floor space ... so use it! By building simple shelves, multi-level racks, or pallets you can make maximum use of the walls and you can even make use of the ceiling area for light objects by using pulleys and hangers. To avoid low back pain, falls, or injuries from falling objects, provide step-stools and design the racks so that young workers can use them with ease. Here are the guidelines:



- The height of the lowest level rack for heavy material should not be lower than workers' knees.
- Heavy materials should not be placed any higher than the workers' shoulders.
- Ensure the racking is secure and strong enough for the weight of materials – mark a safe working load limit.

MAKE LIFTING MORE EFFICIENT AND SAFER

TIP

A heavy load suspended in the air is always dangerous, especially in a small or crowded factory. Use floor-based lifting devices that raise objects only the minimum necessary to move them.

Young workers can injure themselves through repeated manual handling such as carrying, pushing, pulling or by trying to lift heavy items all by themselves. They are still growing and bones or joints can be permanently injured by too much strain. The solution is to divide heavy items into smaller loads, or for 2 or 3 young people to work together to lift solid items. Although it depends somewhat on the size and strength of the worker, it is generally more efficient to lift more objects weighing less than 20 kg, than fewer objects weighing more.

A useful guideline is that the load a young person lifts should be no more than 15-20% of body weight.

MAKE TRANSPORT EASY

TIP

It is not just lifting that can hurt the back, it is also transporting loads in the wrong way or for long distances, whether holding a load in the arms, on the head or on the back, or pulling and pushing it. The solution is to use simple trolleys or platforms with wheels. Make sure that there are enough so that young people do not waste time waiting for their turn, or worse, take risks by trying to carry something that is too heavy for them because the transport equipment is not available.

BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WITH ELECTRICAL CABLES

TIP

Garment factories that use electrical sewing machines, irons, and cutters have to make arrangements for electrical cables so that they do not lie on the floor and risk being damaged, nor suspended slightly above so that they can trip a passing worker.

There have been many instances of garment factory fires due to overloaded or improperly installed or damaged electrical systems. A young worker can be trained to help in finding cables that need attention, but only trained adults should be allowed to fix electrical equipment; safe electrical work requires specialist equipment including protective equipment

They should be trained not to touch, much less use, electrical equipment that is damp or if the floor beneath is wet.

EQUIPMENT & TOOLS

- ✓ Do mark which equipment is hazardous and 'off limits' or prohibited for young workers
- ✓ Do train young workers on electrical hazards and how to control the risk
- ✓ Do train young workers to use machines and tools safely

Even simple tools and equipment can cause severe injuries when misused or not maintained properly and these lead to work stoppages and absenteeism. If a garment factory is to remain competitive, it cannot afford these delays which can seriously affect output and delivery schedules. But there are several simple measures that you can take to avoid slowdowns due to an accident.

TIP

ASSESS WHICH EQUIPMENT IS SUITABLE FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Garment factory managers need to assess which equipment young workers, when trained properly, will be using. The general rule is that high powered equipment, with fast-moving parts, is not to be used by young people under 18. The risk is too great. However, all equipment in a garment factory poses some risk, including irons (burns), fabric shearers (cuts), sewing machines (punctures). Here are some rules to keep in mind:

- Machines that may be inappropriate for young worker are those with a back and forth movement, such as a weaving machine, that may catch a worker unaware, or a fast-moving machine that performs cutting and punching, or shearing operations
- For the machinery which young workers are allowed to use, ensure that all the safety guards are in place and none have been altered, removed, or broken. When you buy equipment, check that it has all of the safety guards in place. Used machinery sometimes has the guards broken or dismantled.
- Are cutting tools sharp? (dull cutting tools lead to workers experiencing more cuts and more serious cuts because workers have to use extra force to use them).
- Are there some machines or vehicles that are frequently breaking down causing delays or process bottlenecks? Are there some that workers fear or hesitate to use? (there may be risk of electrical shock) Workers will operate more quickly and efficiently if they are not afraid of being injured by a machine. Buying a more expensive but safer and better built machine will often save you money in the long-term.



TRAIN FOR SAFETY

TIP

When it comes to electrical equipment and cutting tools, the most important thing you can do for young workers is to train, observe them at work, critique, re-train, and monitor on an on-going basis. Any worker injury can lead to wasted time and money both for the worker and for you. Train them to:

- Never carry an electrical tool or iron by the cable
- Never disconnect the tool from the electrical outlet by pulling on its cable
- Keep electrical extension leads off the ground
- Don't plug too many cords into one power supply
- Keep cables and hoses away from heat, oil, and sharp edges
- Disconnect cutters and irons when not using them, before servicing and cleaning them
- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing when working around machines where it can be caught in moving parts or with machines where one part rolls against another, creating a "nip point" in which hands or clothing can be caught





LIGHT, NOISE, TEMPERATURE

- ✓ Do not expose young workers to high noise levels (where they have to raise their voice to communicate normally)
- ✓ Do not expose young workers to high levels of vibration, teach them the symptoms of exposure
- ✓ Do check young workers' eyesight
- ✓ Do make sure young workers are not exposed to extreme temperatures

Do provide footrests and platforms for young workers to have a comfortable work station

Do give young workers a chance to move around and change position

Do use the "elbow rule" to determine the correct hand height when working

Some owners hire young workers because their eyesight is better. But even young workers must have good lighting for detailed work and general safety. Bad lighting leads to low productivity and poor quality work ... as well as eye strain, fatigue and headaches for the worker. Numerous studies show that better lighting pays off: it can increase productivity as much as 10 per cent and reduce errors by 30 per cent.

CHECK THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOUNG WORKERS' FACES AND THEIR WORK

A clue that the light in the workshop is too dim and that young workers are straining their eyes is when they hunch over their work, holding it close to their face, or squinting. It may also be a sign that their vision needs to be checked. If you suspect that this is the problem, then encourage them to have an eyesight test; you can help them pay for it by giving them paid time off to visit the doctor.

Ask your young workers from time to time whether they have enough light to see well and improve the situation if necessary. Better light does not always mean buying more light bulbs.

There are four ways to improve lighting

1. increase natural light with high windows and skylights

2. improve the way lighting and work is arranged

3. paint walls and ceilings a light color

4. keep light sources clean

Natural light is the best and cheapest source of light, but small workshops seldom make full use of it. The higher the window, the more light it gives (low windows tend to get blocked by machines or materials). Skylights can give twice the light of a low window. If skylights are not practical, translucent plastic panels in the roof are a low-cost substitute. Unless you have lots of skylights, you are likely to have shadows and unequally-distributed light. Detailed, precision work should be done close to the windows or the work stations grouped together and additional direct lighting provided in that spot.

Light-coloured paint or whitewash on the ceiling, walls and equipment can cut lighting bills by one-quarter. It also helps make a pleasant, cheerful work environment and encourages cleanliness and good housekeeping. In order to spread reflected light evenly throughout the interior, ceilings should be as near white as possible. For the walls, pale colours are better than flat white, although whitewash is OK too. Machines, work-benches and desk-tops should normally be slightly darker and of a different colour than walls and floors so they can be seen easily.

TIP ELIMINATE GLARE

“Glare” is a bright point of light that is visible either directly or out of the corner of a person’s eye when she/he is working. It can come either from a lamp or a window. Glare causes discomfort, irritation, and eye fatigue and therefore reduces worker productivity. To reduce glare,

- put covers over light bulbs and fluorescent tubes. Make sure there are no naked bulbs in young workers’ field of vision
- cover windows with translucent blinds, curtains, or shades when the sun shines in
- plant trees or vines outside the windows
- change the windows from transparent to translucent glass or plastic
- change the orientation of work-stations so that, instead of facing the light source, workers have their sides or backs to the window.

TIP GOOD MAINTENANCE INCREASES LIGHT AT NO COST

Even with the best lighting, you can be losing half of the light unless the windows are washed, the light bulbs are dusted, and the lights are replaced regularly. Because the output from bulbs and fluorescent tubes declines over time (25-30% during their life), the ones over the workstations should be replaced regularly. Do not scrap the old ones — put them in less-used areas, corridors or storage rooms.

Dirt on windows and skylights decreases available light by as much as 20 per cent. Because skylights are difficult to reach, no one cleans them. Set up a regular schedule to dust the lamps and clean the windows, inside and outside. Do not allow young workers to clean skylights because of the risk of falling. Assign them instead to cleaning walls and floors; you will notice a great difference in the light overall.



NOISE EXPOSURE IS TOO HIGH IF YOU CANNOT HEAR SOMEONE SPEAKING TWO METERS AWAY

TIP

Machines can make a great deal of noise. Young workers' hearing can be permanently damaged if they are exposed to high levels of noise for too long, or if the level of noise is too loud such as impact noise; they are more vulnerable to hearing damage than adults. Loud or sudden noise is also hazardous because it startles or distracts workers, and prevents warning shouts from being heard.

To reduce noise exposure, there are three possible approaches to take:

- 1 Eliminate the source.** The best way to reduce noise is to buy new, quieter equipment. Although they may initially cost more, they are often of higher quality and last longer because they are built to tighter tolerances (e.g., gears fit together better). Shut down noisy equipment when not needed.
- 2 Isolate it.** Do you use a generator if the power goes out? Enclose the machine or create a sound barrier between it and the workers, or see if it can be moved further away from where workers routinely work. The level of noise drops quickly with distance from the source.
- 3 Maintenance.** Lubricate machines to prevent unnecessary wear and grinding noises. Replace chipped gear teeth, adjust vibrating or imbalanced parts, and inspect noise control attachments to ensure that they are functioning properly.
- 4 What about ear plugs or other hearing protection?** Ear plugs are not a good or permanent solution because they make communication difficult — especially warnings — and because they are uncomfortable to wear for long periods. Workers tend to remove them. Any form of safety and health protection that depends on the worker to provide the protection should be a last resort!



Although it is common in many workshops for young workers to squat, kneel or sit cross-legged to work, they get tired more quickly than if they have a chair. Providing a simple stool and table set-up is a cheap way to fight fatigue in most industries. Remember, that if young workers are working in one spot for hours (e.g. weaving), then make sure they take regular rest breaks to get up and move around.

The height of the work surface is also important. According to the “elbow rule”, the correct hand height for working is when the lower arm is at right angles to the upper arm, in other words, when the hand is level with the elbow. For standing work, the hand height may be a little lower than elbow level and when very strong force is needed, a bit lower still so as to use the weight of the body. The height of the work surface or seat should be adjusted to the size of each worker. Adjustments can be made by placing wooden platforms or stands under tables, work surfaces or work items. Platforms are particularly useful for young workers who tend to be shorter than adults. Ensure these have edge protection if they create a fall hazard.



WORKERS COMFORT FACILITIES

- ✓ **Do ensure clean drinking water is available**
- ✓ **Do insist that young workers take routine rest breaks**
- ✓ **Do provide clean toilets, with separate ones for men and women**

During each working day, young workers need to drink clean water (more than adults), eat meals and snacks, wash their hands, use a clean and private toilet, and rest and recover from fatigue. This can be difficult or easy, unpleasant or comfortable, a health risk or an aid to hygiene and nutrition. A small investment in such facilities usually pays for itself in many ways. On the other hand, worker dissatisfaction can be costly.

PROVIDE CLEAN DRINKING WATER

TIP

Clean drinking water is essential for all types of work. Especially in a hot or humid environment, each worker can easily lose several litres of water per work shift. If not provided with drinking facilities, workers become thirsty and gradually dehydrated. This greatly increases fatigue and lowers productivity.

The availability of water is particularly important for young workers because they need to drink more fluid more often than adults.

If you keep a supply of clean water near the workers, less time will be lost in going to get a drink and workers will be more likely to drink enough. Do not place drinking water in washrooms or toilets, near hazardous machines or anywhere it can be contaminated by dust, chemicals, or other substances.

Make sure that the drinking water is cool. If you cannot afford a water cooler, place the water in the coolest place in the factory. Do not leave drinking water in the sun or in a hot place.

MAKE SURE THAT REST MEANS RECOVERY

TIP

Young workers usually start the day alert and productive, but their energy level decreases as the day goes on. Fatigue grows gradually and may not be apparent until the person is really tired. Especially younger workers, because they lack seniority and self-confidence, have a tendency to keep pushing themselves to the limit. It is important for you, the manager, to insist on them taking breaks. If the worker rests before showing signs of fatigue, recovery is much faster. Short breaks taken frequently are much better than infrequent but long breaks. For most types of work, workers will produce much more with breaks than they can by working continuously. At least one ten-minute break in the morning and one in the afternoon, in addition to a longer break for lunch is absolutely necessary. A five-minute break every hour is an excellent idea.

A good rest area also helps to reduce fatigue. Getting away from a noisy, polluted or isolated workstation helps young workers relax and recover from fatigue. A simple canopy outside the workplace may provide a shady rest area, especially if there is fresh air. Avoid bright sunlight: the eyes need to rest as well as the body. A table and chairs are needed and a place to lie down can also be a good idea. This type of rest area can also double as a safe place to eat.

- Sweat glands are not fully developed, and the thermo-regulatory system is not fully developed during childhood leading to increased sensitivity to heat and cold
- Young workers have greater energy and fluid requirements per unit of body weight than adults. The reason is that they lose more water per kilogram of body weight through the lungs, due to the greater passage of air through them, through the skin (larger surface area) and through the kidneys (inability to concentrate urine). They are more likely to dehydrate.

TIP **PROVIDE ADEQUATE TOILETS**

How big is your work force and what is the gender breakdown? The number of toilets should be in direct proportion to the workforce. Too often there are not enough women’s rest facilities in a factory where most of the workers are women. This causes delays, which again affects productivity.

HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE

- ✓ **Do have a policy against harassment and violence in the factory**
- ✓ **Do be a good role model**
- ✓ **Do address harassment or violence immediately if it occurs**

Young workers work better when they enjoy their work and have good relations with their co-workers and supervisors. They perform better when they are treated in a respectful way. A respectful environment is free from harassment and violence.

Harassment is an act or comment imposed on someone who is not in a position to complain. It can slow down production, lead to high employee turnover, create a bad reputation in the community, and cause a downturn in business. In the past, some managers thought it was normal to slap or shout at young workers to “keep them in line” or “show them their place”. Now we know that this is not an effective way to discipline or motivate workers. No form of harassment or violence is acceptable in a modern factory!



For the individual concerned, harassment can result in extreme suffering — both physical and psychological. The physical problems can take many forms including headaches, sleep problems, and stomach disorders. On the psychological side, it can make a young person depressed, lose motivation, and in extreme cases, take his or her own life.

DO NOT IGNORE ANY SIGN OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

TIP

Sexual harassment includes:

- unwelcome touching or patting
- staring or leering
- suggestive remarks, lewd comments, or telling “dirty” stories and jokes
- sexually suggestive wall posters or calendars
- hints, requests or demands for sexual favors
- rape.

Myanmar culture does not condone sexual harassment, but it is still far too common and the effects are serious. A young person can bear the scars of sexual abuse for a lifetime. Even when there has been no physical contact, there can be psychological damage in the form of shame or guilt although the young person was not the one at fault. Religious sensitivities can be particularly strong on this matter. It can have a devastating effect on a young person’s whole life when an unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease such as an HIV infection results.

The business also suffers. Co-workers may act as if they ‘don’t see’ but they do notice and may well be afraid, concerned, or less productive as a result. If they talk about it at lunch or after work with family and friends, this will have an impact on your company’s reputation, as well as their respect for you as a manager or owner.

Most of the time the harasser is in a more powerful position than the one being harassed. Supervisors or others in authority think they can get sexual favors from young workers by using threats and intimidation. Young girl workers are at special risk of sexual harassment and abuse, but boys are also at risk of exploitation and intimidation.

EXPLAIN TO WORKERS THAT VIOLENCE IN ANY FORM IS UNACCEPTABLE

TIP

When we think of violence we think of blows, cuffs, and slaps. But there is also verbal violence and more subtle kinds of attack. For example:

- humiliation, insulting, name-calling and ridicule
- shouting, swearing, isolating the young person or ignoring them
- damage to personal belongings



You may not think non-physical harassment is serious but it is. It can end up in physical violence. It can – and almost always does – seriously damage the morale of the workforce.

TIP IDENTIFY YOUNG WORKERS WHO MIGHT BE VULNERABLE TO HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE

Whatever the type of harassment or violence, the situation or the cause, it is up to you to stop it, or better yet, prevent it from happening in the first place. Here are steps that will help prevent harassment:

- ▲ Identify the young workers whose sex, race, ethnic background, age, or religion makes them appear different from the others and who may be at extra risk.
- ▲ Talk to young workers periodically to make sure that they are not facing problems.
- ▲ Keep an eye on them to detect changes in their behavior, mood and motivation.
- ▲ Ensure young workers are not working in dark areas of the site or alone away from others.

TIP DEVELOP A WRITTEN POLICY

Issuing a policy against harassment and violence in the factory sends a strong message that this will not be tolerated. A written policy brings the issue into the open, allowing discussion and lets everyone know what to expect. You may not have formal policies on issues like this. However, because harassment, especially sexual harassment, is often hidden and considered shameful, it may continue for a long time and damage the atmosphere at the site unless people know that it will be punished. A written policy can give your workers the confidence to act against it. You must be sure that whatever is written in the policy is something you are willing and able to enforce, no matter who is discovered to be the harasser – even the boss or a key foreman. The policy should include the following points:

- a clear definition of harassment and violence, especially sexual harassment
- how to make a complaint if something happens
- what disciplinary measures may be taken if allegations are found to be true.
- a guarantee that all complaints will be treated confidentially and someone who complains about harassment or violence will not suffer as a result

The last point is especially important for young workers who may otherwise be afraid of reporting abuses for fear of further harassment or losing their jobs. Investigations into complaints of harassment and violence must be fair and independent as the accusations may be false and serious damage can be done. The complaint procedures should be realistic and not too complex. Complaints can often be handled informally. Sometimes it helps if someone is designated as a focal point for complaints to whom the workers can talk and get resolution of the problem. It is very important to minimize gossip and blame. Make sure all employees know the policy and display it prominently.



DON'T HESITATE WHEN AN INCIDENT OCCURS

TIP

Harassment is usually not a one-off occurrence. It is usually repeated and it gets worse each time it is repeated. A manager or supervisor who fails to take action at the first sign of harassment sends a message that the behaviour is acceptable. If an incident of harassment or violence does occur at the site, respond immediately.

The first action to take is to be sympathetic and support the victim.

The second step is to investigate fully and enforce the disciplinary measures written in the policy where the allegations are proved. If you do not do this, the policy will have no meaning and all the work you have done is of little value; people will not heed the policy. It will be only words on paper. Depending on the seriousness of the harassment, assess whether it is sufficient to reduce the contacts between the victim and the harasser or whether the harasser will need to be fired. If possible, give them a second chance while still taking action to discipline them. Follow up regularly to ensure that the harassment has stopped.

Eliminating chances for harassment or violence to occur in your factory is not only ethically and morally right but it also makes good business sense. Harassment has a bad effect on teamwork. All in all, it costs you money, destroys creativity, and erodes employee morale. The bottom line is that harassment and violence can ruin your business.

The five guiding principles for creating a respectful work environment are:

- 1 Be vigilant for any type of workplace harassment and violence
- 2 Keep an eye on those most vulnerable to it.
- 3 Establish a policy to prevent and address harassment problems.
- 4 Post the policy where it can be easily seen and sensitize all the workers.
- 5 Show that you take the policy seriously. Model good behavior yourself and take appropriate action at the first sign of violence or harassment.





STRESS

- ✓ **Do keep watch for signs of stress and understand the symptoms**
- ✓ **Do take steps to reduce the causes of stress**
- ✓ **Don't allow a work environment that young workers fear**

Young workers are often under greater stress at work than people realize. They are learning new skills. They are trying to get the work done on time. And they are struggling to meet the employer's expectations in terms of quality. In short, they are trying to prove themselves.

If you add to that other types of stress, such as long working hours with few rest breaks plus pressures from family or domestic chores, the young person can become rapidly overwhelmed. Add to this, hassles from other workers or even a tense, fearful atmosphere at work, and the situation becomes overwhelming.

GIVE YOUNG WORKERS SOME MEASURE OF CONTROL

TIP

Because they are young and inexperienced, young workers are usually given little say or control over their work situation. They may have no access to their earnings, no privacy, no choice about whether or not they work or what type of work to do. Knowing this, a wise manager or supervisor will do simple things to give the young worker some sense of control over her/his work and life, for example, choices over which task to do, which adult worker to work with, or what time to take a rest break.

TREAT STRESS AS A SERIOUS ISSUE

TIP

High levels of work-related stress are not just unpleasant, they can cause illness, accidents, and violence. Because stress interferes with sleep, it compounds the effect of other factors such as inadequate food, fast-paced repetitive work, exposure to infection, and many others. Remember, even though the physical work may not be hazardous, a work situation that causes high levels of stress among young workers is to be considered "hazardous work" in the legal sense.²

² ...which affect the health, safety, or morals....



One factor that is frequently forgotten is that, all too often, young people are carrying a heavy burden of family responsibilities. They may already be supporting a spouse and children. In a household where the father or mother is ill or incapacitated, they may be the sole support for an unknown number of relatives. As a result, they may feel desperate to keep the job and will agree to almost any terms or conditions, often at great risk to their own health and future.

TIP A PARTNER CAN EASE ENTRY AND TRAINING

One technique that has been used by others to reduce stress in the workplace is to assign each new young worker a "buddy" or mentor. Sometimes this is a more experienced competent young worker. This mentor answers questions – particularly the simple ones that a young worker may be too embarrassed to ask of the boss, helps with the hands-on training and especially the practice of new skills, and offers safety tips.

The atmosphere or mood on the work site profoundly influences the productivity of young workers. Creating a positive workplace climate by making small improvements in many areas can help to create a better, more efficient and competitive business.



HELPFUL RESOURCES





WHO CAN HELP

HAZARD CONTROL INFORMATION

This booklet covers many occupational health and safety issues common to garment factories, but not all. It does not go into detail on hazardous chemicals, particularly the very toxic ones, nor can it cover all the laws and regulations which govern exposure to hazardous agents. These more technical areas require the assistance of specialized professionals such as occupational hygienists to identify, evaluate, and devise control measures. If you have Internet access, go to www.ilo.org/safework for help. Otherwise, the ministry of labour, ministry of health, medical school, or hospitals may be able to help.

Name of the Employers' Organisation in Myanmar,
 Its general phone number
 Contact person's name

Department of labour contact information
 Its general phone number
 Contact person's name

Labour Inspectorate contact information
 Its general phone number
 Contact person's name

Trade union contacts
 Its general phone number
 Contact person's name

Medical care contact information
 Its general phone number
 Contact person's name

i Tsui, Winnie. "Myanmar Rising: The Garment Sector Takes Off." Hong Kong Development & Trade Council: Research section, 22 June 2016.

ii "Myanmar", The Economist <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1983218582&Country=Myanmar&topic=Economy#>. Extracted 16 Nov. 2016.

iii D'Ambrogio, Enrico. 2014 "Workers conditions in the textile and clothing sector: Just an Asian affair?", European Parliamentary Research Service, PE53222, European Parliament.



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