

International
Labour
Organization

Working with outh

**Tips for owners and managers of garment
factories with young workers in
Myanmar**

**Myanmar Programme On the Elimination of Child Labour
(My-PEC)**

KEEP THEM SAFE

Working with Youth

Tips for owners and managers of garment factories with young workers in Myanmar

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.

Myanmar Programme On the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC)
Fundamental Principles and Right at Work (Fundamentals)
International Labour Organization (ILO)

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**GENERAL
GUIDELINES**

KEEP THEM SAFE

THE FUTURE IS NOW!

Myanmar's garment sector is going to 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 young workers in many of these jobs. Because of their education and energy, young workers can have 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
- have quick reflexes
- have good eyesight and hearing
- appreciate the chance to learn skills and are anxious to do well
- are enthusiastic with a great work ethic
- are energetic
- may have some new ideas for improving the workplace and working conditions to make them more efficient and productive
- 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
- most 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 24. 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 IS CRUCIAL. Youth become safe and successful employees if they are

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

THEY DESERVE CARE. Young workers should have special consideration because they are:

- still growing and their organs, muscles, and bones are still developing
- more sensitive to certain chemicals, toxic fumes, or noise than adults
- quick to move — sometimes without thinking — and more likely to take 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 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 parts of the workshop where they will be put 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: 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 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 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 toxic chemicals) the age limit is 18. This seems like an easy rule but there are three challenges:

- 1** 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 prep work being done in homes and other informal working places to ensure that children are not being drawn away from school and into work.
- 2** 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 underfoot on the factory floor.
- 3** Birth records. It is not easy to see whether an adolescent is above or below minimum age for work if s/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) Convention 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 below 18 years of age. Hazardous work includes:

- ➔ **lifting heavy items or carrying loads for long distances**
- ➔ **operating or working close to heavy or dangerous machinery**
 - equipment that cuts or crushes
 - equipment that is motorized or powered by an engine
 - machines that can trap the hand, foot, hair or clothing
- ➔ **work for long hours or at night**
- ➔ **work with toxic chemicals or close to where they are being used, as well as in heavy dust or smoke**
- ➔ **work in places where there is risk of attack going to and from work**
- ➔ **work demanding heavy responsibility for others' safety or goods**
- ➔ **work on high structures (roofs, trees, walls) or on equipment where they might fall (ladders, scaffolding, steep slopes)**
- ➔ **work under ground (caves, tunnels) or where there are holes and pits**
- ➔ **work in or under water (diving, standing in water or on damp ground for more than a few minutes)**
- ➔ **work in small spaces (tunnels, boxes, refrigerators)**
- ➔ **work alone 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. This booklet will help you do this in ways that make good business sense.

KEY FACTS ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY OF YOUTH

Workplace accidents and illnesses can have tragic consequences for workers and their families. They can also have a very bad impact on your company, due to a tarnished reputation, worker absenteeism, skilled workers leaving to go to another company, work slow-downs, medical costs, and loss of customers.

In contrast, 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 your while to make sure that your factory is safe for all your workers. A place made safe for young workers 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 -- protects you, as well as your young employees and helps avoid misunderstandings by making clear the rights and obligations of both.

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 stay safe while doing it. All young workers, including apprentices and trainees, must work under close supervision.

4

Do not let anyone under 18 do hazardous work. If the working conditions or the work itself is dangerous, let adults do it. Keep young workers away from parts of the site, products and machinery that is hazardous.

Because there are many advantages to hiring young workers, you want to use them to best advantage. You will want to assign them tasks which draw on their strengths. But youth need to be protected from work situations that they are not ready for yet. Whether you have youth serving an apprenticeship or those over the legal working age doing regular work, this booklet will tell you what you need to know about how to protect your younger 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 business. It has been proven time and time again, that the simple suggestions given here help to transform a business in many ways. Your factory will not only become a safer and more pleasant place to work, it can actually become more profitable. Equipping a young worker for the future will yield rewards many times over. A worker you train yourself knows the 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 changes in your own factory site step by step. We suggest doing a “walk-through” periodically using the checklist.



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

WORKING WITH YOUNG WORKERS: THE BASICS

If you have read this far, it shows you are a concerned person who wants to have a legal and safe factory that anyone will recognize right away as a good place for young people to work. This reputation will help you attract buyers for well-known brands and help you attract good workers. You will become known as a good garment manufacturing company and be more competitive through efficiency, good quality work, and reduced accidents. The ideas and solutions provided in this booklet do not come out of thin air. They have been developed and tested time and time again with thousands of factories like yours.

The following section outlines some general rules to keep in mind when 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 that might displease you. However, most injuries and mistakes of young people occur simply because they are not sure of how to do the job right and try to figure it out on their own. The best way to prevent this from happening is to create an atmosphere in which it is “OK” to ask questions. Another way is to assign each of the young workers to a supervisor who will pay close attention to them in the early stages. Make sure this person feels comfortable with young people and who will encourage them to speak frankly and to raise any concerns they might have. Make sure the supervisor knows what tasks are OK and which are “off limits” to young workers.

2: MAKE IT A “FEMALE-FRIENDLY FACTORY”

Because of the high proportion of young women in the garment industry, think of how the workplace and the work should be organized so female workers can be most efficient. For example, you will want to give consideration to the height and spacing of workstations, storage and shelving. On-site child care arrangements are a must and a private space for breastfeeding or rest is especially appreciated. From the standpoint of safety, all young women in the workforce should have training on proper lifting techniques, and the importance of avoiding chemicals that pose reproductive risk. Factory-provided uniforms may be an alternative to loose and flowing traditional garb so as to minimize danger of getting caught in machinery. It is helpful to have female managers and supervisors; a Worker Representative who is a woman will be especially valuable.

3: MAKE IT SAFE FOR YOUTH

Don't wait to be inspected. Make sure you know the risks in all jobs and work areas in your factory – looking at it from the standpoint of the younger workers. If young workers are safe, all workers will be safer. Let both the young and older ones help you in identifying hazards and suggesting solutions; they are an ideal source of information because they experience the hazards directly. See that the first aid box, fire extinguishers, and other emergency devices are ready to use and that young workers know where they are and what to do. Prepare them for all kinds of emergency: accidents, fires, violent situations, etc. Show them escape routes and explain where to go if they need medical treatment. Demonstrate the safety precautions to take for each task. While physical safety is important, consider psychological well-being as well because all situations that can lead to fatigue, stress, or harassment can have a direct effect on the attitudes of workers and their productivity.



SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

The following section looks at a few of the ways (it cannot cover all) you can protect your younger workers and which will most likely have the added benefit of improving productivity and efficiency. Some of the most important areas of action for garment factories are presented first.

KEEP THEM SAFE

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 fired**

A contract really helps to avoid misunderstandings. Never rely on a verbal agreement. It is easy to forget what you have said and agreed to. A written contract reduces chances for conflict in the future by clarifying the rights and obligations of both you and your young workers. Without it, you may end up spending a lot of time and money if a dispute arises.

INFORM YOUNG WORKERS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TIP

Young workers have rights under Myanmar law. They are eligible for benefits that other workers get, such as breaks 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 supplies, protective clothing or equipment — that is the employer's responsibility.

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 paycheck because of school expenses and providing support for other family members. It will enhance production as no time will be wasted in following up 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 and it will save you time in the long run because you will have all the information you need in your files.

KEY POINTS IN A YOUNG WORKER CONTRACT

1. Info about the worker

- Name
- Age
- 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

TIMES & HOURS

- ✓ **Do not allow young workers to work overtime**
- ✓ **Do make sure young workers take adequate lunch breaks and rest breaks**
- ✓ **Don't 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 try to fill it or risk losing future work. As a result, Long hours is probably the #1 problem facing workers in the garment industry and it leads to many other problems....

NO LONG HOURS; NO OVERTIME

TIP

Do not let young people work more than 8 hours in a shift. Although many young workers are more than willing to sign up for extra work in the hope of getting overtime pay, do not be tempted to keep them on. Long hours can make even the simplest work hazardous. Experience shows that letting youth work more than 8 hours, or making them come back to work without at least 8 hours of sleep will reduce quality and increase the number of mistakes and injuries. Mistakes and injuries cost you 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 moral 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 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 go a long ways toward reducing fatigue. Be sure young workers fill in a time log each day.

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 the 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 risks associated with cleaning**

It is easy to say that young workers should not work with toxic 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 toxic.

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

TIP

Chemical dyes are increasingly taking the place of the vegetal textile dyes that have been used for thousands of years, and 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-proof or fire-resistant. Textile producers are exploring new technologies and therefore new products are coming on line all the time to respond to consumer demands. One cannot assume that old dyes were safe, nor are the risks for new ones fully known. Myanmar is currently producing largely low-end garments, but it is developing fast and its workers will increasingly be exposed to new chemical products.

LABEL ALL CHEMICAL CONTAINERS AND STORE THEM 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 pure water -- close by so that workers can flush their eyes if splashed with a chemical.

Make sure that all containers with chemicals in them have a label with the technical name and a pictorial symbol indicating how toxic it is in case there are workers who 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 protective equipment required? What do you do if it gets on the skin, in the eyes, is spilled or explodes? Remember, if the chemical safety data sheet says the material is hazardous, it is "off limits" for younger workers; they should not use the chemical nor should they be asked to dispose of empty chemical containers. Never re-use chemical containers for something else!

CHEMICALS COMMONLY FOUND IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

- Formaldehyde, used in permanent press garments and wrinkle resistant cloth, can irritate lungs and skin, and is 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 also to be endocrine disrupters
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), used in certain colours of printing ink on clothing, can affect the immune, reproductive, nervous, and endocrine system as well as 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 odor-causing bacteria (in socks for example), has not yet been determined to have a health impact, although 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 up, cleaning the sewing equipment, cleaning the sanitary facilities, running errands, bringing someone a piece of equipment tool or product that they need. What's wrong with this?

- Sweeping up may mean the young person is exposed to high amounts of cotton fibre, lint, silica sand, and other particulates. No one thought about telling them to moisten the floor first so that the dust doesn't fly around ...
- Cleaning equipment may mean working with solvents, the vapours of which may be harmful to the skin or 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 harsh cleaning agents, some of which may have been mixed in unmarked containers or in bottles with incomprehensible labels. No one thought to give them rubber gloves, or gloves in a size that fits their smaller hands ...
- Running errands may mean (literally) "running" which increases fatigue, heat exposure, carrying loads that are too heavy, or bringing items which the young person should not have contact with such as containers of toxic chemicals.

Young people need training on all the tasks they do, not just the main ones, and this is why having a 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:

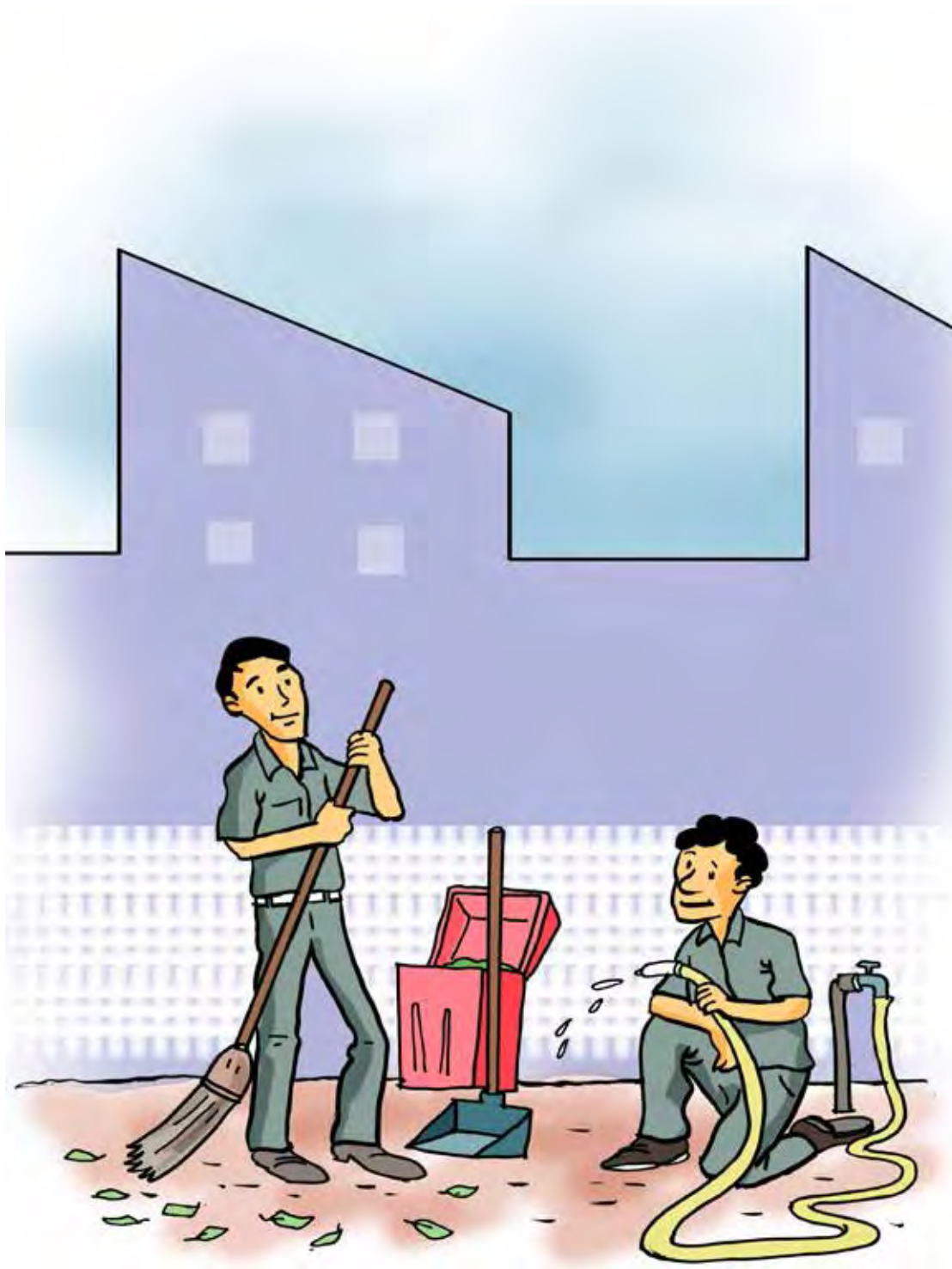
5. Fire-Fighting Measures

- 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 ALREADY TOO MUCH

TIP

However, some hazardous dusts and fumes can be “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.



WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE MORE VULNERABLE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS?

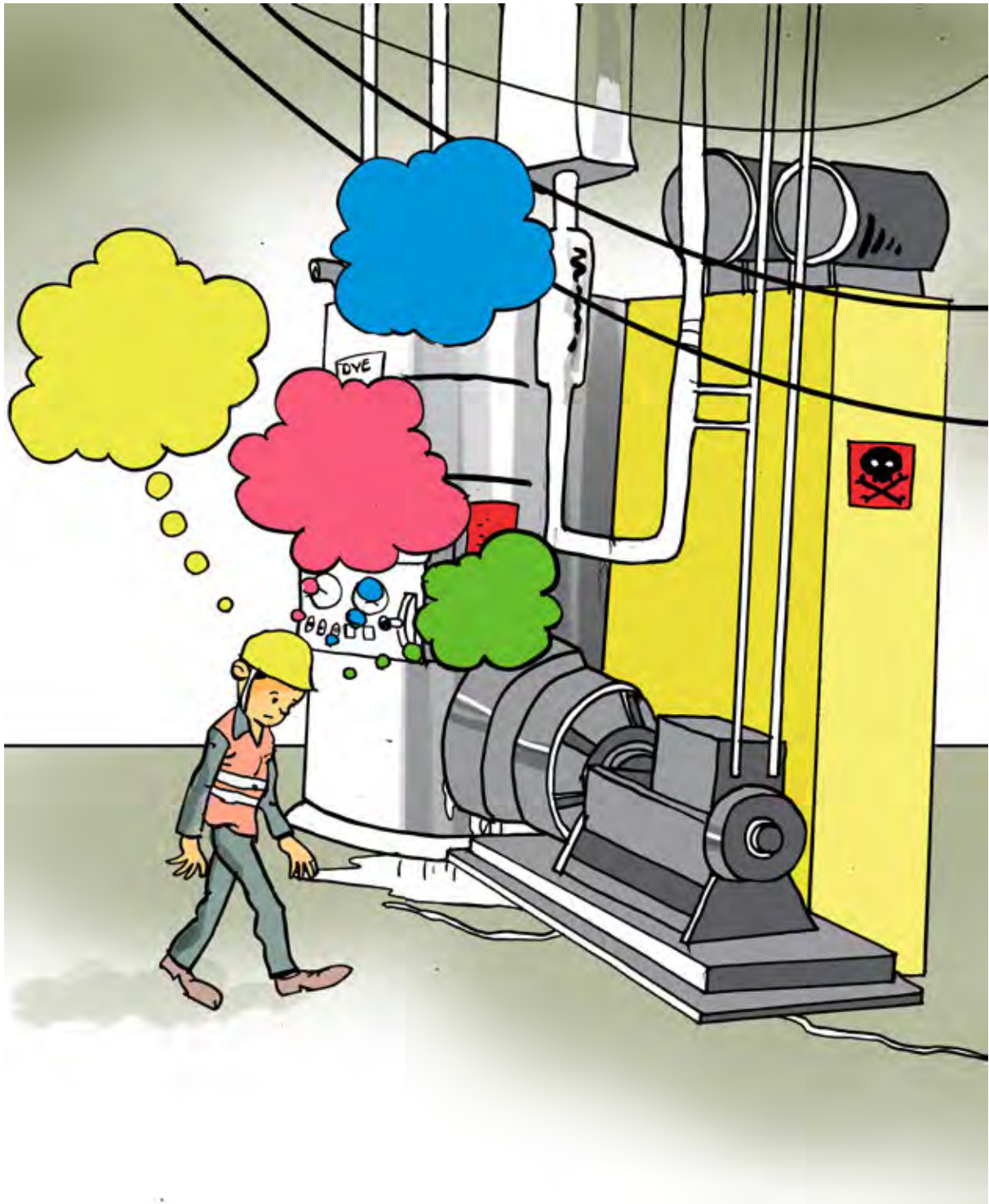
- In a young person, the elimination of hazardous agents is less efficient because the gastro-intestinal and endocrine systems and renal (kidney) function are still maturing. Exposure to toxic substances in the workplace can hinder the process of growth.
- Detoxification of hazardous substances is less effective because the enzyme system is less mature.
- Absorption of toxic chemicals through the skin is higher among youth 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 toxics through respiration (breathing) is higher among youth 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 often more active. With increased energy requirements come an increased susceptibility to toxins.
- 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 very bad name for safety. While the loss of life and loss of factories have been exceptionally high in this industry it is mainly because simple common sense safety rules were not followed. Don't let this happen to you. Rules include:

- 1 No smoking.
- 2 Emergency exits ALWAYS unlocked.
- 3 Enough emergency exits for the size of the factory.
- 4 Emergency exits easily accessible – no furniture, machines, boxes, piles of cloth -- are ever placed against the exit, even temporarily. Workstations are arranged so that there is a clear 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 and are not out of date.
- 8 All workers know where the fire extinguishers are and how to operate them.
- 9 Areas with stoves, hotplates or kettles are walled off from the production area. There is a fire extinguisher.



WORKPLACE DESIGN

- ✓ **Make sure the workstation is the proper size for the young worker**
- ✓ **Do give young workers a chance 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 very low; but the benefits are often 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 mean a loss of production time and extra effort. The rule is to keep all objects the worker will use within the area that s/he can reach easily without leaning forward or stretching. This area is quite small especially for young workers.

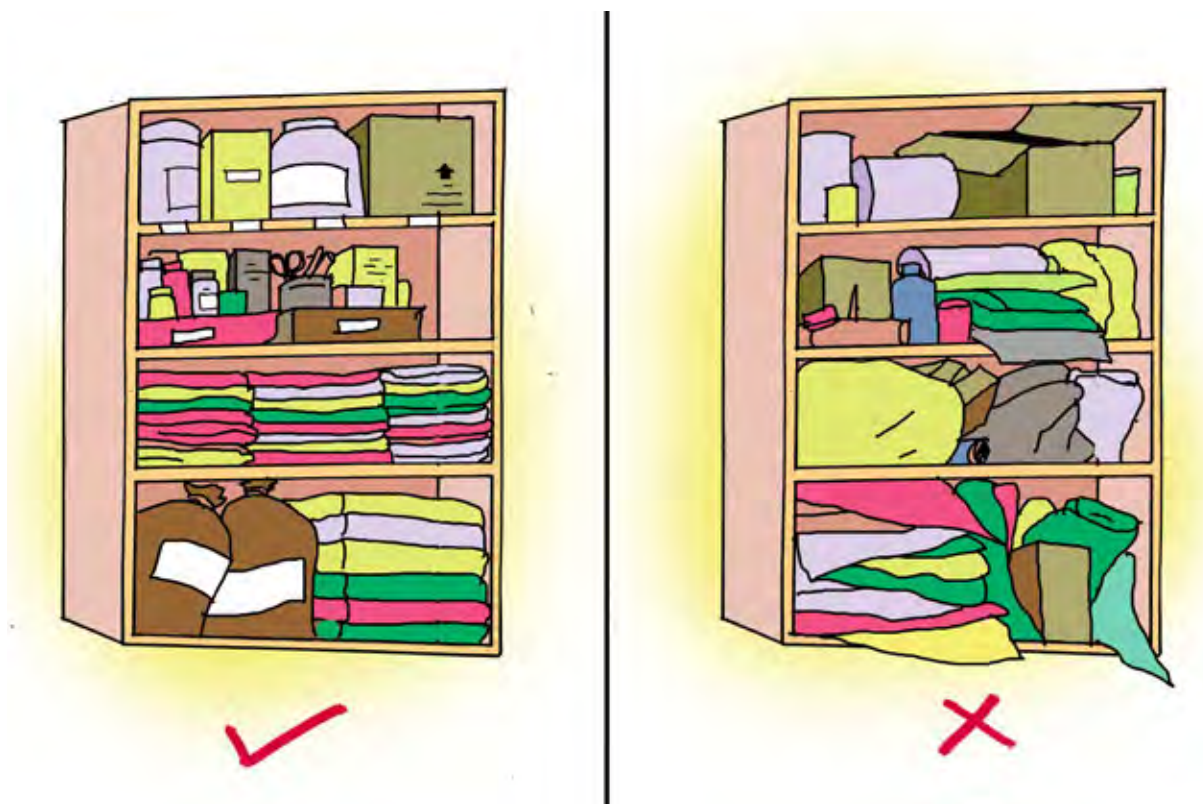
When young people are working in an awkward position, they take longer to do the work and they get tired more quickly. For example, shoulder muscles tire rapidly when the person has to reach and lift. The back is strained when the body must bend forward or twist. The longer someone tries to work in an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

Although it has been common in many factories 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 garment work. Remember, if young workers are working in one spot for hours, 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.





SAFETY

- ✓ **Do keep the floor clear of 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 safety 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 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.

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 **AVOID SCATTER**

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.

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 lifting 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 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 WIRES

TIP

Garment factories that use electrical sewing machines, irons, and cutters have to make arrangements for electrical cords 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 wiring. A young worker can help in finding cords that are becoming frayed or need attention, but only trained adults should be allowed to fix electrical material; electrical work requires protective gear.

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

EQUIPMENT & TOOLS

- ✓ **Do mark which equipment is hazardous and 'off limits' for young workers**
- ✓ **Do train young workers on electrical dangers**
- ✓ **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 dismantled.
- Are cutting tools sharp? (dull tools lead to more cuts and more serious cuts because workers have to use extra force to cut with them).
- Are there some machines or vehicles that are frequently breaking down causing delays or bottlenecks? Are there some that workers fear or hesitate to use? (there may be risk of an electrical short) 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 check periodically. 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 cord
- Never disconnect the tool from the electrical outlet by pulling on its cord
- Keep power extension cords off the ground
- Don't plug too many cords into one power supply
- Keep cords 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 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 let youth work where there are high noise levels
- ✓ Do check young workers' eyesight
- ✓ Do make sure young workers are not exposed to extreme temperatures

Do provide footrests and platforms for young workers who are short.

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 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-colored 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 colors 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 color 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 s/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 IS TOO LOUD 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 noise for too long, or if the level of noise is too loud; 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 levels, 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.

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 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.

TIP PROVIDE CLEAN DRINKING WATER

Clean drinking water is essential for all types of work. Especially in a hot 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 than adults.

If you keep a supply of water near the workers, less time will be lost in going to get a drink and they will be more likely to drink enough. However, do not place drinking water in washrooms or toilets, near dangerous machines or other hazards or where 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 it in the sun or in a hot place.

TIP MAKE SURE THAT REST MEANS RECOVERY

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 are plants and breezes. 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 children 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.

PROVIDE ADEQUATE TOILETS

TIP

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 hurts productivity.

HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE

- ✓ **Do write a policy against harassment and violence in the factory**
- ✓ **Do model good behaviours yourself**
- ✓ **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 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 own life.

TIP DO NOT IGNORE ANY SIGN OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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.

WARN WORKERS THAT VIOLENCE 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.

IDENTIFY YOUNG WORKERS WHO MIGHT BE VULNERABLE TO HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE

TIP

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

Having a policy against 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 gives them 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 will be taken
- 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.

TIP DON'T HESITATE WHEN AN INCIDENT OCCURS

Harassment is usually not a one-time occurrence. It is usually repeated and it gets worse and more entrenched 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 behavior 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 supportive of the victim.

The second step is to enforce the disciplinary measures written in the policy. 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 action at the first sign of violence or harassment.



STRESS

- ✓ **Do keep watch for signs of stress**
- ✓ **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 rapidly becomes overloaded. 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 work, exposure to germs, and many others. Remember, even though the physical work may not be dangerous, a work situation that causes high levels of stress among young workers is to be considered "hazardous work" in the legal sense.

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 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 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**

KEEP TEAMS SAFE

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

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- 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.



KEEP TEAMS SAFE

Factory work is often a pathway to success. More and more international companies are opening up factories in new areas, creating new jobs and new opportunities to gain skills and experience. As a worker in a garment factory you may be cutting cloth, moving the cloth and other materials from place to place, sewing by hand or on machine, checking garments or packing the finished products. This can be good and decent work, but there are always things that can hurt you or make you sick. Your employer is responsible for providing a safe workplace, but it is wise for you to know the dangers and what to do about them.

The top 3 dangers for youth



- Working long hours, in the same position, sometimes into the night
- Lifting things which are too heavy for you
- Fast, repetitive movement

What you should do to stay safe on the job

KNOW THE LAW

Myanmar has a law to protect young workers.

The law says:

Article 14

- (a) No one under age 14 shall be employed in a shop or establishment.
- (b) No one under age 16 shall be required to work overtime

Article 15

- (a) No one between the age of 14 and 16 may work more than 4 hours in any one day.
- (b) No one shall work between 6 pm and 6 am (night work).
- (d) No one under age 18 shall be allowed to do prescribed dangerous work or in a dangerous workplace.

GET TRAINED

Your boss is responsible for seeing that you are properly trained to do every task that's part of your job and for showing you hazards to watch out for. You should be trained to handle cleaning products safely, proper lifting methods, the right way to use and store equipment, and what to do if there is an emergency such as a fire, robbery, or abuse.

Afterwards, it is **your** responsibility to follow instructions and safety rules carefully.

ASK

You are a sensible person. So, if something seems unsafe to you, ask about it.

If you are not sure how to do something, ask for the instructions to be repeated. If you are still not sure, or afraid that you will make a mistake, ask again! If someone bothers or threatens you, ask for help.

So OK, you don't want to appear foolish by asking too many questions, but remember, it is much better to ask than to make a mistake! And much, much better to ask questions than to get hurt and lose your job!

Do not be shy—ask!

What your employer does for your safety

- Makes sure there is good ventilation, e.g. one that sucks dust out
- Makes sure all equipment is safe: all moving parts are enclosed so that you cannot get clothes, hair, or hands caught. Noisy equipment is enclosed to reduce the sound.
- Provides carts or trolleys for moving cloth, finished goods, and other heavy things
- Does not use fabric that has been treated with dangerous chemicals
- Provides contracts for all young workers and does not let them work overtime or without breaks

TRUE STORIES

Many young workers work in small or large garment factories. This work can be tiring and stressful. There are many safety problems to watch out for. Find out what to do so you do not get hurt, like these young workers did....

"I work in a factory that makes blue jeans. When I come home from work, I am covered with blue dust, and cough up blue mucous. My nose is always stuffed up and I never seem to stop coughing."

"I run a sewing machine all day, sitting on a hard stool. After a few hours, my leg starts to feel numb from pressing the foot pedal. My neck hurts all the time from bending over the machine. I don't know how long I can do this job."

"I am the person who removes spots from the finished shirts. I use a cleaning chemical, but I don't know what it is. There are ten of us in a small room—I usually have a headache from the chemical smell by the end of the day."

Some other dangers and what to do about them

BODY STRAIN

- Use mechanical lifting equipment or trolleys to move heavy items.
- Get help from others when lifting heavy items.
- Remember "SLIM" (Safe Lifting Methods)

Squat to pick up the object
Lift using your leg muscles not your back,
In close, against your body
Move your feet to turn, don't twist the body

- Find a comfortable position to work in. Change your position frequently during the day.
- Use a seat that is the right height. Add cushions or a footrest if it is not adjustable.
- Take regular rest breaks, even short ones, to stretch.
- Set up your work station so that everything is at elbow level and easy to reach.
- Stand on a mat. Even cardboard will help.
- Change position, move around, or shift weight from one foot to the other.

MACHINE INJURIES

- Use metal mesh gloves when you work with cutting tools. Your boss should provide these.
- Wear clothes that are not too loose because they can get caught in moving parts of the machines.

FALLS

- Remove items cluttering the floor in your work areas or walk ways.
- Never run or move too fast.
- Do not carry items too tall for you to see over.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles.

DUST

- If the work is dusty, use a dust mask provided by your employer.
- Clean up dusty areas regularly, with a wet mop if possible.

ELECTRIC SHOCK

- Do not touch or use a machine that looks damaged or is wet. Tell your boss or supervisor about it.

HARASSMENT

- If you are being repeatedly yelled at or harassed, get help from a worker rep.
- If someone demands sexual favours, call a co-worker and inform your boss.

NOISE

- If there is so much noise that you need to shout to be heard, your hearing can be damaged. Wear ear plugs or other hearing protection provided by your boss.

HEAT & ILLNESS

- Drink a lot of water. Take rest breaks out of the heat.
- If you start to feel dizzy or sick to your stomach, tell a co-worker. Get out of the heat, drink water, and put water on your head and arms to cool down.
- Wash your hands with soap before eating and drinking.

FIVE WAYS TO STAY SAFE

1. LOOK FOR HAZARDS

2. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

3. GET TRAINING

4. FOLLOW SAFETY RULES

5. ASK QUESTIONS AND GET HELP

KEEP TEAM SAFE

Garment manufacturing is a source of good jobs. As it is becoming increasingly vital to the national economy and in Myanmar's trade with other countries, it is likely to provide good employment for years to come. An added benefit, as seen in other countries, is that working in garment manufacturing can be an important channel for women's empowerment. Therefore, this could be a good occupation for you in years to come if you stay safe now! But there are hazards in garment manufacturing, so it is really important for you to know the risks, your rights under the law, and your responsibilities. Find out what to do so you do not get hurt, like these young workers did.

TRUE STORIES

There were 28 of us doing different kinds of garment manufacturing work. One day some people came to give us medical tests. We were asked to blow into a device to test our breathing. It turned out that 21 of us already had obstructive lung disease although we were still young. They said it was because there was a lot of dust in the air from the cloth we were working on. (Awan, Pakistan, 2012)

"I was always tired after a working day. I always had a headache. If I had a headache during work I didn't tell anybody. I would just go on working. In the factories targets are set; the girls feel the pressure of making this target. When they feel bad at work, there is often no possibility to take a rest." (Lieten, Bangladesh, 2010)

"...main hazard ... we call it the 'mental issue'. Managers curse the workers every day to make them work harder. Furthermore they are often threatened by section managers to decrease salary, be dismissed, and not allowed to work overtime, because workers need overtime to receive enough salary for their livelihoods ... Therefore workers are concerned daily about job security, which is often more important than health and safety. That is why they have constant stress in their minds." (Kong, Cambodia, 2005)

Are you a worker under 18 years of age? You are legally old enough to work if you are above 14 in Myanmar, but did you know that if the work or working conditions are dangerous, you could be considered child labour?

As a young worker, you have a right to special protection. ILO Conventions and the laws in most countries require employers to provide a safe workplace and work that is safe for you. Not all employers know about or follow these laws, and the laws are not always enforced. So it is important for you to know how to protect yourself and to know what your employer should provide. These five steps will help you stay safe.

5 WAYS TO STAY SAFE IN GARMENT FACTORIES

1. Look for hazards

Be aware of the dangers in each of the tasks you are asked to do. Some of them may be obvious and can hurt you right away. Others may be “hidden” and might not make you sick until later.

Think about some of the ways you might get hurt or become sick in your particular job.

- Do you use sharp objects, such as needles or cutters?
- Do you lift, push or pull bolts of cloth or other heavy materials?
- Do you clean equipment or fix it if it needs repair?
- Do you operate any powered equipment like a sewing machine?
- Do you breathe fumes or dust?
- Do you work near a loud machine?
- Do you work at a high rate of speed or do the same movement over and over?
- Do you ever get abuse or improper suggestions from co-workers or management?
- Do you ever work alone or at night?
- Do you work for long hours, overtime, or more than 40 hours a week?

These are just examples. Every job has its own health and safety hazards. Learn to look for them, but remember, it's your employer's responsibility to make sure the work you do is appropriate for your age.

Pay attention to warning signs that the place where you are working might be unsafe. There may be a problem if:

- Other workers are getting hurt or sick
- There is no regular training programme
- Equipment is in bad repair or electric cords are frayed
- Machines do not have safety guards
- Chemicals are stored in containers with no labels
- There is no action against sexual harassment
- Workers are allowed to use shortcuts to save time
- The work floor is messy
- There is no place with soap to wash; there is no clean cold water
- The supervisor shouts at the workers
- There is no health and safety committee or union Workers' Rep

2. Know your rights

There are international guidelines that protect young workers. These say that the conditions where you work must be safe and that you must not be asked to do work which is physically or psychologically dangerous. These international guidelines say that you should not:

- Work in confined spaces, such as where cloth is being dyed, sanded or packed
- Use powered machinery, equipment, or tools
- Work near or with hazardous chemicals, loud noises, or vibrations
- Work in extreme heat or cold
- Work alone, long hours or late at night

National laws and local ordinances usually limit the hours and times of day that you can work. These are intended to ensure that you have time for school and adequate rest. Your employer must follow these rules and should also:

- Provide a safe and healthful place to work
- Provide training, including information about chemicals
- Provide basic protective gear such as gloves
- Pay for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job
- Pay at least the minimum wage
- Prohibit harassment, bullying, and discrimination
- Allow you to join or organize a union

Your employer cannot punish or fire you if you:

- Refuse to do dangerous work
- Report an occupational hazard or injury
- File a complaint with a government agency

3. Get training

You should know how to do your job and know how to do it safely. Your boss should train you to do every task that's part of your job so you can do it without getting injured. For example, you should be shown how to:

- Avoid contact with toxic chemicals
- Lift heavy things in the right way
- Use cutting tools safely
- Operate, repair and clean tools and machines in a safe manner
- Handle bullying or abuse by someone while at work
- Respond to violent situations or crises in a safe manner
- Know what to do when there is a fire or someone gets hurt

Keep yourself from getting hurt. Ask for more training! Always ask questions if you are not sure how to do something. If you do not get the training you need from the person in charge, ask someone else. Ask a co-worker, union representative, teacher, or older worker. You can say:

“I think I understand how to do this, but can you watch to make sure I’m doing every thing right?”

“I’m still not sure how to do this. Can you show me once more?”

4. Follow safety rules

Training won’t keep you safe if you don’t follow all the safety rules afterwards!

- Do every task safely, the way you have been trained
- Keep work areas clean and free from clutter
- Don’t drink alcohol or use drugs; don’t try to work when you are very tired
- Report any health and safety hazards to your boss

What if something happens?

- For every type of emergency, know what to do, who to call or where to go
- If you get hurt, tell the person in charge right away.
- If necessary, go to a health clinic or doctor.
- Inform the FGLLID and fill out an injury form
- Tell your parent or another family member.

5. Ask questions and get help

If you are not clear about what to do or if something worries you, ask for help. The person in charge will prefer that you ask questions (especially if done in a respectful way) rather than make a mistake which can cost him money. Co-workers also may be able to help you.

“I really like working here but I am not sure about how to do this task that I have been assigned. Could you show me how to do it?”

“These boxes are heavy and I don’t want to hurt my back. Can I ask a co-worker to help me? It will be safer and quicker.”

“According to what I learned at school, I think I’m being asked to do tasks I am too young for. But I am afraid the supervisor will think I am lazy. I will ask one of the other workers for advice.”

What if you need more help?

If the person in charge does not help, or if you are afraid you will get fired or punished if you speak up you can:

- talk to one of the adult workers whom you feel you can trust
- talk to a Workers’ Representative or another union member
- talk to your parents, a teacher, or a community worker
- call or write to the FGLLID or other agency in charge of worker protection

Key messages

1.

Garments are an export industry and therefore labour standards in garment manufacture must conform to international standards. An employer caught violating international labour standards jeopardizes its own contracts and taints the reputation of the enterprise and the industry for decades.

2.

All workers – long term, short term, and subcontractors – must have formal contracts that specify the amount of pay, pay arrangements, work hours/day, days/week, and employment benefits.

3.

The buyer company is responsible for monitoring the workers and working conditions throughout its supply chains. This means that buyers need to know where and how its supplies are sourced.

4.

A (female) worker/safety representative, specially trained to be attentive to young worker needs and vulnerabilities, is advised.

5.

Traditional customs of respect may make it hard for youth to speak to elders, and workers to speak to management. To improve working conditions and improve safety, employers must make special efforts to reduce barriers to communication, especially for younger workers.

6.

Because of the large proportion of women in the garment industry, an additional booklet directed at them is advised and additional questions included in the risk assessment form

7.

The main dangers for young workers in garments are:

- a. Fire
- b. Chemicals used in dyes and fabric processing
- c. Long hours
- d. Heat stress
- e. Sharp tools and unguarded machinery
- f. Ergonomic injuries (repetitive motion)

**Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
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