



U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division

ARE YOUR TEEN WORKERS TAKING OUT THE TRASH?

Taking out the trash is one of the duties commonly assigned to teen workers in retail and service establishments. While most of the duties associated with taking out the trash are safe for teens to perform, there are both safety hazards and potential violations of the federal child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act to consider if young workers take trash to a compactor or baler.

Teen workers are permitted to take the trash to the site of the compactor or baler and set it on the ground, but workers under the age of 18 are generally prohibited from actually dumping the trash into the compactor. In addition, they may not operate the compactor and that includes “pushing the on-button.” Nor may they unload the compactor. Performing any of these actions may violate Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12 of the federal child labor provisions.

This prohibition applies even if an employer does not own the compactor but uses centralized equipment that is owned or provided by someone else (*i.e.*, retail businesses located in shopping malls).

There is a limited exception in the law which allows 16 and 17 year olds to load, **but not operate or unload**, certain paper box compactors. This exception applies only if all of the five following requirements are met:

1. The equipment meets one of the following the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard:

In order for employers to take advantage of the limited exception discussed in this section, the <u>paper box compactor</u> must meet one of the following ANSI Standards:
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ANSI Standard Z245.2-1992

ANSI Standard Z245.2-1997

ANSI Standard Z245.2-2004

ANSI Standard Z245.2-2008

2. The equipment contains a poster or notice that:
 - Identifies the specific ANSI standard that the equipment meets,
 - States that 16- and 17-year-olds may only load the equipment,
 - States that no one under 18 years old may operate or unload the equipment;
3. The equipment must include an on/off switch with a key-lock or other system, and the control of the system must be in the custody of employees 18 years of age or older;
4. The on/off switch must be maintained in the off position when the equipment is not in operation; and
5. The equipment cannot be operated while it is being loaded.

The exception for loading does not involve all compactors—just paper box compactors. The limited exemption does not apply to anyone under 16 years of age. This age group may not under any circumstances dump trash into, operate, or unload any compactor.

For information regarding Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12 for compactors, please read [Wage and Hour Division Fact Sheet No. 57](#).

For additional information about the federal Fair Labor Standards Act child labor provisions, including a complete list of all Hazardous Occupations Orders, visit *YouthRules!* at www.youthrules.dol.gov or call the Department of Labor's toll-free helpline at 1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243).