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Young Workers and Safety

As the summer season approaches, school is wrapping up for many high school (and even middle school) students who have one focus for the 2011 summer - finding a summer job. And for many of those teenagers, finding a job in the agriculture industry is a logical choice. Travelers heading north or south on interstate 65 can picture the billboard stating, "There's more than corn in Indiana". There is a reason. With corn, soybeans, melons, apples, grapes, tomatoes, snap beans, pop corn, tobacco and mint being some of the popular crops harvested in Indiana, young workers have a variety of choices working in the agriculture industry. Though the billboard had zero to do with the agriculture industry (it actually was a billboard for the Monticello water park, Indiana Beach), the water park and agriculture industry have something in common – teenagers.

In 2008, the agriculture industry was not just in the top three for Indiana industry fatalities - it was the top industry. And as [Indiana Labor IN Focus](#) points out, more than 1/3 of the young worker fatalities that occurred in 2008 occurred within - you guessed - it the agriculture industry. There are many factors putting a teenager at an increased risk for an injury or fatality on the job. According to the [Marshfield Clinic for Research Foundation](#), those risks can include lack of experience, unfamiliarity with the work itself, enthusiasm outweighing judgment, an increase in risk-taking attitude, a drive to "prove one's self and reluctance to ask questions.

A little bit about Occupational Safety and Health in Indiana's Agriculture Industry

With more than 9,000 Hoosiers employed in the agriculture industry, the [Indiana Department of Labor \(DOL\)](#) states that Indiana agriculture employees engaging in crop production are more likely to be injured or made ill while working than those agriculture employees who work with animals.

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII), in 2008 Indiana's agriculture industry had the **highest non-fatal injury and illness rate** of any major Hoosier industry, at 7.6 per 100 workers.
- **One in every six** fatal workplace injuries in Indiana in 2008 occurred in the agriculture industry.
- According to the BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), **22 Hoosier agriculture workers** were fatally injured in 2008.
- **Eleven** of these fatal workplace injuries involved a **tractor**, seven of which resulted from a **tractor overturn**, making tractor overturn the most predominant fatal event in this industry.

[Source: Indiana Department of Labor](#)

Aside from the physical hazards teen agricultural workers can be exposed to, there are various environmental hazards that employers might need to remember. The [DOL](#) notes that farmers and farm workers suffer from increased rates of respiratory diseases, noise-induced hearing loss, skin

disorders, certain cancers, chemical toxicity and heat-related illnesses. Though many teen employees are working for a minimal amount of time, precautions still need to be taken to minimize or eliminate potential hazards workers may meet. As [Indiana Labor IN Focus](#) points out, with worker's compensation claims for heat illness being the highest among agriculture workers, employers may want to take notice.

The DOL provides a list of actions employers can take for potential hazards teen workers may engage in with its [OSHA Youth in Agriculture section](#) on the DOL website. Additionally, the [Indiana DOL](#) also provides a detailed list of what occupations teens under the age of 17 are prohibited from performing. In the end, employers are responsible for keeping employees safe and protected during working hours. Teen summer help may need a little extra attention, and with National Safety month around the corner in June, employers may utilize this time to get safety practices in place.

Resources

[Indiana Labor IN Focus](#)

[www.in.gov/dol/files/INdiana Labor IN Focus Special Ag Edition.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dol/files/INdiana_Labor_IN_Focus_Special_Ag_Edition.pdf)

[Marshfield Clinic for Research Foundation](#)

<http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/proxy/MCRF-Centers-NFMC-NCCRAHS-SaGHAF-Resource-2009.1.pdf>

[Indiana Department of Labor](#)

<http://www.in.gov/dol/2729.htm>

[Indiana Labor IN Focus Fall 2010](#)

[http://www.in.gov/dol/files/INdiana Labor IN Focus Special Ag Edition - Fall.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dol/files/INdiana_Labor_IN_Focus_Special_Ag_Edition_-_Fall.pdf)

[OSHA Youth in Agriculture section](#)

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/agriculture/workers.html>

[Indiana DOL](#)

[http://www.in.gov/dol/files/Teen Labor Hazardous - Prohibited Occupations.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dol/files/Teen_Labor_Hazardous_-_Prohibited_Occupations.pdf)