



*U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division*

## **ARE TEEN WORKERS TAKING OUT THE TRASH ?**

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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 youth employment provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act to consider if young workers take trash to a compactor.

Teen workers are permitted to take the trash to the site of the compactor 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, nor may they unload the compactor. Performing any of these actions may violate Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12 of the federal youth employment 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 compactors. This exception applies only if all of the following requirements are met:

1. The equipment meets American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard Z245.2-1992 or Z245.2-1997;
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 apply to anyone under 16 years of age. This age group may not under any circumstances dump trash into a compactor, operate it, or unload it.

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**For information regarding Hazardous 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 youth employment provisions, including a complete list of all Hazardous Occupation Orders, visit *YouthRules!* at [www.youthrules.dol.gov](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov) or call the Department of Labor's toll-free helpline at 1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243).**