

Electronic Alert

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Learn a Lesson from Scrooge – Be Sure Not to Overwork Young Employees

By Wilson Jarrell

Now that the turkey population can take a deep sigh of relief, and even Portland has earned its first (admittedly extremely light) dusting of snow, it can only mean one thing: the holiday season is upon us and soon schools will be closing for a couple of weeks.

With the teen population unleashed, employers may be looking to take advantage of the sudden increase in availability of the youth workforce in an attempt to keep up with the holiday rush. Therefore, now is a perfect time for a refresher on the restrictions placed upon youth workers and the businesses that employ them. Indeed, these regulations are taken seriously – Washington Labor and Industries recently fined two businesses more than \$60,000 for allowing minors to work beyond the allowed hours.

Here in Oregon, employers may hire minors 14 to 17 years of age without any individual work permits. However, the employer must obtain an annual minor employment certificate which can be applied for online on the Bureau of Labor and Industries' [website](#).

When school is in session, 14- and 15-year-olds may not work during school hours, more than three hours on any school day, or work more than eight hours on a non-school day. Additionally, 14- and 15-year-olds may only work during the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (between June 1 and Labor Day, they may work as late as 9:00 p.m.). Furthermore, the total number of hours a 14- or 15-year-old may work is restricted: they may work at most 18 hours per week during the school year, and 40 hours per week when school is not in session. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are not restricted in the number of hours they can work in a day, and may work up to 44 hours per week.

For our friends in Washington, the scheme is largely the same for 14- and 15-year-olds, except that they may not work more than 16 hours per week when school is in session, and in no instance can work more than six days per week. Washington does restrict the hours of work for 16- and 17-year-olds: four hours per day between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. (midnight on Friday, Saturday, or the day before a school holiday), for no more than 20 hours per week, six days a week. When school is not in session, 16- and 17-year-old workers may work nine hours a day for a total of 48 hours per week, six days a week, between 5 a.m. and midnight. Note that Washington does still require individual parent/school authorization forms for minor workers.

Don't forget that minors are also generally prohibited from operating power-driven machinery and from driving while on the job, with limited exceptions. Make sure your meal and rest break requirements are also modified to meet the requirements for minors depending on the state in which they work.

Since Bob Cratchit was an adult, Scrooge's only punishment for making him work more hours around the holidays was the three visitations from some not-very-spooky ghosts. But if you follow his example for your minor employees, you could end up with more than just some pesky ghosts to teach you a lesson.

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