



News Release

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DIR Director and State Schools Chief Address Young Worker Safety at Career Fair

Sacramento—May 24, 2010—The Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) and the Department of Education, both members of the California Partnership for Young Worker Health and Safety, today held a joint press conference at the Sacramento Job Corp Center Career Fair to highlight the importance of protecting youth from being injured or killed on the job.

“We want to motivate and inspire California’s young workers to be safe on the job,” said DIR Director John C. Duncan. “Many of them feel that because they are young and just starting out in the workforce that they do not have a say, and that is simply not true. Our young workers are the future of California and if they know their rights and take the necessary precautions now, those habits will benefit and protect them throughout their careers.”

Approximately 630,000 youth from ages 16 to 19 are working at any given time in California, frequently in entry-level jobs with little or no safety training. Every six minutes somewhere in the U.S., a teenager is injured on the job. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, an estimated 146,000 young workers nationwide are injured on the job annually. An estimated 47,000 are injured seriously enough to go to the emergency room. Most of these injuries can be prevented through a comprehensive education and awareness strategy.

“As we encourage our young people to explore careers and job opportunities, it is vital that we also provide them with the tools they need to ensure their own health and safety in the workplace,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. “In this day and age, it is not a matter of should, but must. In other words, all young people need to know about their workplace rights and responsibilities, which include the right to speak up, ask questions, and take initiative to practice safety. The Safe Jobs for Youth public awareness campaign provides this critical knowledge to our young people ensuring they enjoy and learn as much as possible and are as safe as possible in their respective jobs.”

The California Partnership on Young Worker Health and Safety, funded by the California Commission on Health and Safety and Workers’ Compensation, is comprised of government agencies and statewide organizations representing educators, employers, parents and job trainers, offers online resources including fact sheets and comprehensive information detailing safety and labor law requirements. Online materials also include publications and FAQs for young workers to learn about their workplace rights.

This year, the Partnership again sponsored a job safety awareness contest which included safety posters and a 30-second video public service announcement designed and developed by teens to convey the importance of workplace safety for youth. The winners were honored guests at today's event.

The winners' posters will be distributed statewide to schools, libraries and other teen venues to raise public awareness, and the video PSA that is awarded first place will be distributed to California television stations, teen web sites and featured on movie screens at theatres located in the winner's community.

Young workers are encouraged to report workplace hazards to Cal/OSHA and can refuse any work if it poses an immediate danger. California law also prevents employees from retaliation if they report an unsafe working condition.

For more information on DIR's Young Worker program, the California Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation and the California Partnership on Young Worker Health and Safety, visit www.dir.ca.gov/youngworker. Employees with work-related questions or complaints may call the toll-free Worker Information Hotline at (866) 924-9757.

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