Seasonal workers make up a large percentage of the workforce in organizations performing construction, agriculture, roofing, lawn care, parks and rec services and many others. Seasonal workers are those who work in a temporary position for a predefined period of time. Although seasonal workers are only employed for a short while, they should receive the training and supervision they need to work safely.

What Is Seasonal Work?
Seasonal work requires a new workforce with each season who are typically either brand new to the job or haven’t used their skills since the previous work season. By its very nature, seasonal work is an introduction into the workforce.

The majority of seasonal work takes place in the summer, which presents work hazards not present during other parts of the year. Employers should be aware of the special hazards of each job and the need for extra training and safety measures. The following tips will help provide a safer workplace for seasonal employees.

“Safety First” Attitude. Make safety a priority at all times, beginning in the interview process and continuing into staff meetings, tailgate/toolbox talks and training sessions. The more safety is discussed and reinforced, the more important it will be to the seasonal employee. Once an employee is performing the job, be sure that production supervisors do not contradict safety training through unreasonable production demands or shortcuts.

Training. Time spent training new workers and providing refresher training to seasonal workers will pay off in organizational procedures being followed correctly and reduced risk of injuries.

Address Specific Work Hazards. Each organization is unique, and any training should discuss the specific hazards of the job. If the job involves working from heights, extra training should be provided regarding fall protection. If the job involves specific machines or equipment, focus on proper usage and safety procedures such as lockout/tagout. Never assume that new workers will figure things out as they do the job.

Monitor Safety. Safety measures and training should be constantly reinforced through supervision, follow-up and consequences. This may be time-consuming on the part of supervisors, but the safety results and employee performance will speak for themselves.

Teamwork. One good way to train and supervise young or inexperienced workers is to team them up with a skilled, more experienced worker who can teach them how to do the job safely and provide regular feedback on their skill development. It is important that each team leader understands and performs his/her job safely before assigning an inexperienced worker to the job.
Protective Equipment. Personal protective equipment should be readily available for all employees. New and seasonal workers should receive guidance in selecting the proper type of protective equipment, clothing or shoes they need to perform the job safely.

Beware of Fatigue. Extended daylight hours and warm weather encourage many employers to extend work hours. Extended hours may cause fatigue or diminished attention, especially for workers unaccustomed to the environment. A longer workday may be fine as long as there are appropriate breaks and continued attention to safety.

Hazardous Occupations
The U.S. Secretary of Labor has developed a list of hazardous occupations which cannot be performed by those under age 18 under normal circumstances. Parents employing their own children are also subject to these provisions. The current list of hazardous occupations includes:

- Driving a motor vehicle and being an outside helper on a motor vehicle
- Power-driven woodworking machines
- Power-driven hoisting apparatus
- Power-driven metal forming, punching and shearing machines
- Power-driven bakery machines
- Power-driven paper product machines
- Manufacturing of brick, tile and related products
- Power-driven circular saws, band saws and guillotine shears
- Roofing operations
- Excavation operations

For additional information on the types of jobs that can be performed by teens, refer to the Fair Labor Standards Act website listed below.

For Additional Information
Occupational Safety & Health Administration: www.osha.gov
- Teen Workers

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health: www.cdc.gov/niosh

U.S. Department of Labor: www.dol.gov
- Fair Labor Standards Act Advisor