

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions
165 West 46th Street
New York, New York

WALSH-HEALEY AGE LIMIT FOR WOMEN DROPPED TO 16 IN ALL INDUSTRIES

In an effort to speed up war production, and to permit employment of young women in all industries, the United States Department of Labor today ruled that any industry under the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act can henceforth employ girls over 16 years of age.

L. Metcalfe Walling, Administrator of the Public Contracts and Wage and Hour Divisions, announced that Secretary Frances Perkins had signed a further amendment to the exemption under the Act at the joint request of the War and Navy Departments and the Maritime Commission.

These agencies joined with the Labor Department in announcing:

1. In order to meet conditions created by the war production emergency certain provisions of the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act have been set aside by the Labor Department to permit the employment of young women at the age of sixteen rather than at the present age of eighteen, where state laws will permit such employment. This permits these under-age young women to share equally with young men the responsibility of working on the war production front, and makes identical the age standards under both the Fair Labor Standards Act and Public Contracts Act.
2. This action places upon employers the particular duty to see to it that these young Americans, transferring from other fields to industry, are offered opportunities for advancement according to their abilities. Their present welfare and future usefulness must be carefully guarded by employers who should take immediate measures to assure the effectiveness of their vocational training, upgrading, safety and protection, within every plant where they are employed.
3. These young women are replacing men going into our fighting forces. Their employment for the emergency in no way reduces employer responsibility but on the contrary, calls for additional care on the part of those who have them in their charge.
4. This co-operative action on the part of the War and Navy Departments, the Maritime Commission, the Department of Labor and organized labor will make available a substantial increase in the number of workers for the war effort.

Mr. Walling explained that the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act, which applies to any firm, corporation or individual engaged in producing \$10,000 or more worth of war materials and supplies for any Government agency, specifically stipulates:

"That no * * * female person under eighteen years of age * * * will be employed by the contractor in the manufacture or production or furnishing of any of the materials, supplies, articles, or equipment included in such contracts"; and

However, last April the Secretary of War requested that this clause be deleted from all Walsh--Healey contracts in fifteen specific industries, so that those industries could employ girls between 16 and 18. This was approved by Miss Perkins. Since then, the exigencies of war production, said Mr. Walling today, have made it necessary to make similar exemptions in any and all industries.

The action was taken after considerable detailed investigation by the four departments involved.

The Administrator pointed out that there are still certain specific conditions under which young women from 16 to 18 may be employed. He said that all such employment is subjected to the following conditions:

1. That no girl under 16 years of age shall be employed.
2. That no girl under 18 years of age shall be employed for more than 8 hours in any one day, or between the hours of 10 P.M. and 6 A.M., or in any way contrary to State laws governing hours of work.
3. That no girl under 18 years of age shall be employed in any operation which, under the Fair Labor Standards Act or under any State law or administrative ruling, is determined to be hazardous in nature or dangerous to health.
4. That for every girl under the age of 18 years employed by him the contractor shall obtain and keep on file a certificate of age showing that the girl is at least 16 years of age.
5. That a specific and definite luncheon period of at least 30 minutes be regularly granted any women workers under 18 years of age.
6. That no girl under 18 shall be employed at less than the minimum hourly rate set by or under the Fair Labor Standards Act or the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act for the industry in which the exemption is granted.

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