



CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TOPS SOME LISTS IN THE 1996 NATIONAL CENSUS OF FATAL OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES

Editor's Note: The following article on the 1996 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries has been condensed to include only the data as they relate to the construction industry. Other statistics have been included for comparison purposes only. Contact the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the full report.

Largely as a result of reductions in job-related homicides and electrocutions, the total number of fatal work injuries fell in 1996 to 6,112, the lowest level in the five-year history of the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. The downward trend in the past two years reversed the increases reported in 1993 and 1994. (See table, page 77.)

Job-related electrocutions dropped 20 percent, and homicides fell 12 percent from 1995 to 1996. In contrast, fatalities from falls to lower levels continued to rise, reaching a five-year high. Half of the fatal falls occurred in the construction industry. This release profiles these and some of the other fatal work injuries revealed by the census.

PROFILES OF 1996 FATAL WORK INJURIES

Highway traffic incidents and homicides continued to lead all other events that resulted in fatal work injuries in 1996. These two events totaled over a third of the work injury deaths that occurred during the year.

Work-related highway deaths accounted for 22 percent of the 6,112 fatal work injuries in 1996. Slightly over half of the highway fatality victims were driving or riding in a truck. The

following table shows the most common vehicles occupied by highway fatality victims:

Vehicle	Number	Percent
Truck	746	56
Semitrailer truck	352	27
Pickup truck	144	11
Delivery truck	37	3
Dump truck	31	2
Automobile	345	26
Van	73	6
Tractor	25	2
Other or not reported	135	10

Off-road transport-related incidents (such as tractors or forklifts overturning) and workers being struck by vehicles each accounted for about 6 percent of worker fatalities.

Falls continued to rise in 1996, accounting for 11 percent of the fatal work injuries. One-fifth were from or through roofs; falls from scaffolding and from ladders each accounted for about one-seventh. While still relatively small in number, falls from non-moving vehicles rose by almost two-thirds over the previous year.

Nine percent of the fatally injured workers were struck by various objects, such as falling trees, machinery or vehicles that had slipped into gear, and various building materials. Fatalities resulting from being struck by falling objects were at their highest level since the fatality census began in 1992. An increase in the number of workers killed by falling trees and tree limbs in 1996 was partly responsible for the higher level in 1996.

continued on page 78

Fatal Occupational Injuries by Event or Exposure, 1992-1996

Fatalities

Event or exposure ¹	1992 Number	1993 Number	1994 Number	1995 ² Number	1996 Number	Percent
Total	6,217	6,331	6,632	6,275	6,112	100
Transportation incidents	2,484	2,501	2,762	2,587	2,556	42
Highway	1,158	1,243	1,343	1,346	1,324	22
Collision between vehicles, mobile equipment	578	657	654	642	656	11
Moving in same direction	78	99	120	127	95	2
Moving in opposite directions, oncoming	201	244	230	246	214	4
Moving in intersection	107	123	144	99	153	3
Vehicle struck stationary object or equipment	192	190	25	275	240	4
Noncollision	301	336	373	352	348	6
Jackknifed or overturned—no collision	213	237	274	261	264	4
Nonhighway (farm, industrial premises)	436	392	409	387	369	6
Overturned	208	212	226	209	204	3
Worker struck by a vehicle	346	365	391	388	349	6
Water vehicle	109	120	94	87	107	2
Railway	66	86	81	82	75	1
Contact with objects and equipment	1,004	1,045	1,017	916	1,005	16
Struck by object	557	56	590	547	579	9
Struck by falling object	361	346	372	341	402	7
Struck by flying object	77	82	68	63	58	1
Caught in or compressed by equipment or objects	316	309	280	255	283	5
Caught in running equipment or machinery	159	151	147	131	146	2
Caught in or crushed in collapsing materials	110	138	132	99	130	2
Falls	600	618	665	651	684	11
Fall to lower level	507	533	580	578	607	10
Fall from ladder	78	76	86	97	95	2
Fall from roof	108	120	129	143	148	2
Fall from scaffold	66	71	89	82	88	1
Fall on same level	62	49	63	53	49	1
Exposure to harmful substances or environments	605	592	641	609	523	9
Contact with electric current	334	325	348	348	279	5
Contact with overhead powerlines	140	115	132	139	116	2
Contact with temperature extremes	33	38	50	56	32	1
Exposure to caustic, noxious or allergenic substance	127	115	133	107	119	2
Inhalation of substances	83	68	84	62	75	1
Oxygen deficiency	111	111	109	97	92	2
Drowning, submersion	78	89	89	77	67	1
Fires and explosions	167	204	202	207	184	3
Other events or exposures³	76	43	24	25	16	—

¹ Based on the 1992 BLS Occupational Injury and Illness Classification Structures.

² The BLS news release issued August 8, 1996, reported a total of 6,210 fatal work injuries for calendar year 1995. Since then, an additional 65 job-related fatalities were identified, bringing the total job-related fatality count for 1995 to 6,275.

³ Includes the category "Bodily reaction and exertion."

NOTE: Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately. Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding. Dashes indicate less than 0.5 percent or data that are not available or that do not meet publication criteria.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1992-1996.

Job-related electrocutions dropped below 300 for the first time in the five-year period and accounted for 5 percent of worker deaths in 1996. Construction trade workers, such as painters, electricians and carpenters, accounted for a large portion of the decline from the 1995 total. Two-fifths of worker deaths from electrocution resulted from the worker or equipment coming in contact with overhead power lines.

On average, about 17 workers were fatally injured each day during 1996. Eighty-four percent of fatally injured workers died the day they were injured; 97 percent died within 30 days. There were 189 multiple fatality incidents (incidents that resulted in two or more worker deaths) resulting in 546 job-related deaths. This was about 10 percent fewer multiple fatality incidents than in 1995 when 217 events resulted in 686 fatal work injuries.

OCCUPATION HIGHLIGHTS

Occupations with large numbers of fatal injuries included construction trades, truck drivers, farm occupations and sales occupations. (See table, page 79.)

The specific events or exposures responsible for workers' deaths varied considerably among occupations. In the construction trades, about two-fifths of worker deaths resulted from falls to lower levels.

INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS

The construction industry accounted for one out of every six fatal work injuries that occurred during 1996.

Industry divisions with large numbers of fatalities relative to their employ-

Fatal Occupational Injuries by Occupation and Major Event or Exposure, 1996

Occupation ¹	Fatalities		Major event or exposure ² (percent)		
	Number	Percent	Homicide	Struck by object	Fall to lower level
Total	6,112	100	15	9	10
Precision production, craft and repair	1,072	18	3	11	26
Construction trades	592	10	2	8	39
Carpenters and apprentices	87	1	—	15	57
Electricians and apprentices	98	2	—	5	18
Painters	45	1	—	—	56
Roofers	61	1	—	5	67
Structural metal workers	52	1	—	8	77
Operators, fabricators and laborers	2,006	33	7	10	8
Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors	218	4	5	20	13
Transportation and material moving occupations	1,154	19	8	7	3
Motor vehicle operators	913	15	9	5	3
Driver-sales workers	35	1	23	—	—
Material moving equipment operators	177	3	3	22	3
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers	634	10	7	13	15
Construction laborers	291	5	1	14	21

¹ Based on the 1990 Occupational Classification System developed by the Bureau of the Census

² The figure shown is the percent of the total fatalities for that occupational group.

NOTE: Totals for major categories may include subcategories not shown separately. Percentages may not add to totals because of rounding. There were 64 fatalities for which there was insufficient information to determine an occupation classification. Dashes indicate less than 0.5 percent or data that are not available or that do not meet publication criteria

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, in cooperation with state and federal agencies, *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1992-1996*.

ment include agriculture, forestry, and fishing; construction; transportation and public utilities; and mining.

RELATIVE RISK

A comparison of percent distributions of fatalities and employment, can be used to evaluate the relative risk of a job-related fatality for a given occupation, industry or worker characteristic. For example, the construction industry accounted for about 17 percent of the fatality total, about 3 times its 6-percent share of total employment. While employment can be used to evaluate the relative risk of a Fatal work injury, other measures, such as employee exposure hours, also can be used.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAM

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, part of the BLS safety and health statistics program, provides the most complete count of fatal work injuries available because it uses diverse state and federal data sources to identify, verify and profile fatal work injuries. Information about each workplace fatality (occupation and other worker characteristics, equipment being used, and circumstances of the event) is obtained by cross-referencing source documents, such as death certificates, workers' compensation records and reports co federal

and state agencies. This method assures counts are as complete and accurate as possible.

This is the fifth year that the fatality census has been conducted in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The BLS fatality census is a federal/state cooperative venture in which costs are shared equally.

Another bureau program, the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, profiles worker and case characteristics of nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses that result in lost worktime

and presents frequency counts and incidence rates by industry. Copies of the 1995 news release on nonfatal injuries and illnesses are available from BLS by calling (202) 606-6304. Incidence rates for 1996 by industry will be published in December 1997, and information on 1996 worker and case characteristics will be available in April 1998.

For additional occupational safety and health data, access the BLS World Wide Web Internet site: <http://www.bls.gov/osh-home.htm>. 