

Workers Memorial Day — April 28, 2011

Workers Memorial Day recognizes those workers who have died or sustained work-related injuries or illnesses. In 2008, a total of 5,214 U.S. workers died from occupational injuries (1), and 49,000 deaths annually are attributed to work-related illnesses (2). In 2009, an estimated 3.28 million workers in private industry and 862,900 in state and local government had a nonfatal occupational injury or illness. Of those workers, 1.7 million in private industry and 374,100 in state and local government were transferred, placed on work restrictions, or took time away from work (3). An estimated 2.6 million workers were treated in emergency departments for occupational injuries and illnesses in 2009, and approximately 80,000 were hospitalized (CDC, unpublished data, 2011).

Work-related injuries and deaths are costly. Employers and insurers spent nearly \$79 billion on workers' compensation in 2008 (4). Employers, workers, and society overall paid additional costs, including lost productivity and charges to other insurance systems. Additional information on workplace safety and health is available from CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>.

References

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Occupational Highway Transportation Deaths — United States, 2003–2008

Highway transportation crashes are the leading cause of fatal injuries in the United States for both workers and the general population (1,2). Prevention of work-related highway transportation deaths, and highway transportation deaths in general, are long-standing public health priorities (1,3). To assess trends and help guide the prevention of occupational highway transportation deaths, CDC analyzed data from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) for 2003–2008 (2).

A total of 8,173 workers died from highway transportation incidents during 2003–2008, representing 24% of all fatal occupational injuries for the period. The annual average fatality rate for workers was 0.9 highway transportation deaths per 100,000 workers; that rate decreased an average of 2.8% annually during the period. Workers employed in the trucking industry accounted for the greatest number (2,320) and highest rate of highway transportation deaths (19.6 per 100,000 workers). Public health, highway safety, labor, and state agencies; highway designers; and transportation-related associations need to work together to implement effective interventions to reduce the risk for highway transportation deaths for all workers. Employers should adopt, communicate, and enforce safety policies designed to reduce highway transportation deaths (e.g., requiring the use of safety belts in fleet vehicles, restricting cellular telephone use while driving, and allowing for adequate travel time), and ensure these policies are followed by employees.

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