

# Work Zone-related Deaths, Oklahoma, 1998-2008

November 2011

## Oklahoma Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance Program

Each year in the United States, approximately 100 highway and street construction industry workers die and 20,000 are injured on the job. From 1998 to 2008, 41 people were killed in fatal work zone-related incidents in Oklahoma. All the workers were male. The age of workers killed ranged from 18 to 70, with a median age of 41. The largest number of fatal injuries occurred in 2003 and 2007. Injuries were most common in the months of September and October. The most fatal injuries occurred from 3:00-4:00 PM. One-fourth of fatal injuries occurred on Tuesdays, and one-fifth on Thursdays. The least common days for injury were Saturday and Sunday. The largest number of fatal injuries occurred in Tulsa County.

- A 57-year-old and 35-year-old were struck by a motor vehicle traveling approximately 80 miles per hour. They were standing next to a paving machine parked in the median of the road and were surrounded by traffic cones. The oncoming driver looked down to adjust his radio and veered into the median.
- A 63-year-old road worker was standing between two dirt-packing machines when a

dump truck backed into one of the machines, causing it to crush the worker.

- A 25-year-old construction worker fell while working on a bridge 18 feet above the ground. He lost his footing on the scaffolding for the bridge and fell onto the pavement below. He was not wearing any fall protection equipment.
- A 61-year-old male worker was operating a road grader spreading gravel when the grader became stuck. A 47-foot nylon tow rope with a circumference of 10 inches was attached to the stuck grader and a loop of the tow rope was placed over a ripper tine of the towing grader. As the tow rope tightened, it pulled the ripper tine, causing it to come loose, and propelling it toward the stuck grader. The tine went through the back of the stuck grader and struck the worker in the head.



**Contact Information:**  
**Oklahoma State**  
**Department of Health**  
**Injury Prevention**  
**Service**  
**1000 NE 10th Street**  
**Oklahoma City, OK**  
**73117**  
**405-271-3430 or**  
**1-800-522-0204**

## SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

For supervisors and workers:

- Be alert to potential hazards.
- Wear proper safety equipment, such as reflective vests and hard hats.
- Use fall protection systems when working at heights.
- Wear seat belts available on equipment.
- Maintain and utilize equipment according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- Keep workers on foot separated from equipment as much as possible.
- Use spotters to guide equipment operators.
- Install back-up alarms, back-up cameras, or radar systems on all vehicles.
- Establish temporary traffic control plans for work zone areas.
- Make traffic flow in one direction to reduce back-over incidents.

For the public:

- Expect the unexpected and pay attention to road signs.
- Slow down and do not tailgate.
- Obey road crew flaggers.
- Minimize distractions.
- Keep up with traffic flow.
- Be patient and stay calm.

**The Oklahoma Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance Program collects statewide information on 19 occupational health conditions in order to develop and inform occupational injury and illness prevention programs. Oklahoma's occupational surveillance system is a research program of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.**

**For detailed reports, please go to the Occupational Injuries section at:**  
**<http://ips.health.ok.gov>**