

# Workplace Fatalities and Injuries 2000/01

## HSE's provisional figures

Although HSE's provisional accident statistics for the year 2000/01 reveal a slight, but statistically significant, drop in the overall number of non-fatal major and over three-day injuries to workers (employed and self-employed) compared to 1999/00, they also show an alarming 34 per cent increase in the number of fatalities to workers over the same period.

## The details

During the period 2000/01:

- the number of fatal injuries to workers is expected to rise to 295 from 220 the previous year. This signifies an increase in the fatal injury rate from 0.8 per 100,000 workers in 1999/00 to 1.1 - the highest level since the mid 1990s, following a general downward trend in that decade;
- the estimated final figures indicate that there were 215 fatal injuries to employees, 53 more than in 1999/00;
- estimated final figures indicate that there were 80 fatal injuries to the self-employed, 53 more than in 1999/00. The number of fatal injuries to members of the public in the workplace environment is expected to increase slightly to 447 in 2000/01 from 436 in the previous year. Virtually all of these fatalities (96 per cent) occurred in the public sector. Of those fatalities, 331 were reported from the railway industry and 298 of these fatalities resulted from acts of suicide or trespass on railways or other relevant transport systems, compared with 274 1999/00.

## Fatal injuries by sector

The figures show that of the 295 fatalities in 2000/01, 106 took place in the construction industry - a fatal injury rate for workers of 6.0 per 100,000, the highest for over ten years and 28 per cent higher than in 1999/00. Within the agricultural sector, 46 fatalities occurred, compared with 36 in 1999/00. This represents a fatal injury rate for workers of just under 10.0 per 100,000, the highest since

1991/92. The fatal injury rate for workers in manufacturing is expected to be 1.2 per 100,000, compared with 1.0 in 1999/00, though the rate is lower than in most of the 1990s. The rate in the extraction and utilities industries has increased. 'a little' as has that in manufacturing, from 1.0 per 100,000 in 1999/00 to 1.2. The rate in the services sector has increased to 0.4 from 0.2 after gradually dropping over the decade from 1990.

## Kinds of accident and fatal injury

In terms of type of fatality, 73 deaths in 2000/01 were caused by falls from heights, 64 from falling from, or being struck by, moving vehicles (the highest since 1991/92), 52 from falling and moving objects, and 37 from objects collapsing or overturning.

## Reaction

Commenting on the fatalities figures, HSC Chairman, Bill Callaghan said: 'We are greatly concerned at the increase in fatalities during 2000/01 which goes against the downward trend of recent years and are taking firm action to encourage sustainable development. The fact remains that most of these fatalities were preventable. The primary responsibility for the health and safety of workers remains with employers. There is absolutely no excuse for them to ignore their fundamental duty to take all reasonable steps to safeguard their workers' lives. Every organisation needs to put health and safety at the head of its agenda. Responsibility starts at the top in the boardroom and with the chair or chief executive'.

## Non-fatal injuries

In contrast to the disappointing fatal injuries figures for 2000/01, the statistics relating to non-fatal injuries for the same period are rather more encouraging. The number of reported major injuries to workers has fallen by 4.7 per cent from 29,315 in 1999/00 to 27,935 in 2000/01, with the employee rate falling by 5.4 per

cent to 110.3 per 100,000 employees, continuing the recent downward trend. The number of reported over-three-day injuries to workers has fallen by 1.7 per cent from 136,113 in 1999/00 to 133,813, with the employee rate falling by 2.4 per cent to 537.8 per 100,000 employees.

More specifically, rates for over-three-day injury for employees are expected to rise in the extraction and utility supply (2 per cent) and agriculture (1 per cent) industries. However, compared with 1999/00, rates for employees are expected to fall in manufacturing (0.4 per cent), construction (8 per cent) and service (2 per cent) industries. Over the past five years, rates of over-three-day injuries have generally fallen in construction and services.

The over-three-day rate for the self-employed is expected to decrease by 2 per cent to 21.4 per 100,000 in 2000/01. This follows a decrease of 13 per cent between 1998/99 and 1999/00.

## HSC reaction

Bill Callaghan, HSC Chairman, commenting on the continuing downward trend in reported major and over-three-day injuries across most sectors including construction, agriculture and manufacturing, said:

It is good to see that non-fatal injury rates continue to decline, but I do not see this as a cause for complacency. In particular, I am concerned by the possibility that this may indicate at least in part an increase in under-reporting, something we will be taking a close look at. Employers must fulfil their legal obligation under the reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences regulations 1995 to inform the relevant enforcing authority of all reportable health and safety incidents'.