

Health and Safety Executive Releases Latest Workplace Fatal Injury Figures

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has just released [its 2018/19 statistics on work-related fatal injuries](#), indicating that 147 workers were fatally injured between April 2018 and March 2019. This translates to 0.45 deaths per 100,000 workers. HSE reports that there has been a long-term reduction in fatalities since 1981 and that the number has remained fairly constant in recent years, although there was an increase of six workplace fatalities in this period compared to the previous one.

The figures are broken down by sector, revealing that agriculture, forestry and fishing is the worst affected sector, as well as having the highest share of worker fatal injuries (32 deaths and an 18 times higher rate of injury than the average level). This sector only accounts for a small proportion of the workforce, but it had over 20% of the worker fatalities in this latest period, and intensified scrutiny from HSE can certainly be predicted for these activities. Construction is next on the largest share of fatalities, with 30 deaths, and the waste and recycling sector had the next highest rate of injury, at 17 times the average level.

The data also reveals the most common causes of workplace fatalities, with falls from height (40), strikes from moving vehicles (30) and strikes by moving objects (16) being the most frequent.

There is an interesting breakdown of worker demographics that highlights that although workers aged over 60 only account for around 10% of the workforce, 25% of fatal injuries were to workers in this age group.

The report also provides details of fatal injuries to members of the public that were connected to work, which show that a third of these occurred on railways.

Finally, HSE has also released data on deaths in 2017 from [mesothelioma](#), the form of cancer linked to asbestos exposure, which indicates there were 2,523 such deaths in Great Britain in 2017, broadly similar to the previous five years. These are largely related to exposure to asbestos before 1980, and it is expected that death rates will remain similar for the next few years before starting to decline, as a result of the phasing out of asbestos from the 1980s onwards.

The statistics show that the UK is a very safe place to work, but also that employers must remain committed to good health and safety management. More and more scrutiny of employers is taking place, including at inquests, major public inquiries and in regulatory interventions. Fines for breaches appear to be increasing every year, and the consequences of bad health and safety management can be very serious.

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