

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries is a Federal/State cooperative program administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, charged with collecting detailed information on all work-related fatalities in the United States. Chartered in 1992, the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries was developed to provide comprehensive, accurate, timely, descriptive, and accessible information.

# Appendix I

## COMPREHENSIVE

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries collects information on work-related fatalities in all industries for all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and New York City. The benefits of being a Federal/State cooperative program are numerous:

State and Federal source documents can be shared to obtain as much information on each injury as possible; costs are shared between the Federal and State offices; and uniform rules and definitions can be applied to ensure consistency among the data.

A work-related fatal injury is considered to be “in scope” for the fatality census program if the injury occurred on the employer’s premises while the person was there to work; or off the employer’s premises while a person was there to work, was there as a requirement for work, or was in work status. “Work” is formally defined as legal duties, activities, or tasks that produce a product, service, or other result in exchange for money, goods, services, profit, or other benefit.

Under the above definitions, some volunteer workers and unpaid family workers are considered in scope, as are those workers traveling as a condition of their employment. Workers engaged in commuting or recreational activities, however, are considered out of scope.

The distinction between injuries and illnesses also is significant: an injury is defined as any intentional or unintentional wound or bodily damage resulting from acute exposure to kinetic energy, or the absence of such

essentials as oxygen or heat caused by a specific event, incident, or series of events within a single workday or shift. Illnesses are any condition produced in the work environment over a period longer than one workday or shift, typically due to repetitive factors. The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program is a census of fatal occupational injuries; illnesses are not reported.

### **ACCURATE**

To obtain information on every fatal work-related injury, the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program uses a diverse collection of source documents, including death certificates, medical examiner/coroner reports, State workers' compensation reports, Occupational Safety and Health Administration reports, media accounts, follow-back questionnaires, and others. Every fatality must be verified by multiple source documents, and, in 2000, there were more than 22,000 source documents for 5,920 fatalities — an average of almost 4 documents per incident.

In addition, the data are subjected to computer edits and human editing review at the State, regional, and Federal levels to ensure a high level of accuracy.

### **TIMELY**

A significant part of injury prevention is identifying injury trends and addressing them in a timely manner. To accommodate this necessity, the fatality census releases annually aggregated data about 9 months after the end of the calendar year to which the data relate.

### **DESCRIPTIVE**

More than 30 data elements are collected through the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program in order to obtain as much information as possible about the circumstances of the injury and the decedent. Included are demographic data about the injured worker, such as employee status (wage or salaried, self-employed, etc.), age, race, occupation, and industry. Other data elements define the circumstances sur-

rounding the fatal incident, such as the event (transportation incidents, assaults/violent acts, falls, etc.); the sources of the injury (machinery, parts and materials, persons, chemicals, etc.); the activity of the worker when the incident occurred; the location of the fatality; and medical details of the injury (puncture, laceration, burn, embolism, etc.).

## **ACCESSIBLE**

Data from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries are used for injury surveillance, safety research, safety promotion, safety training, regulations assessments, and many other safety-related issues. The key to a successful statistical program is to provide the data to people who can make a difference. Accomplishing that requires easily accessible information, which the fatality census strives to produce. Aggregated data and reports from the fatality census can be obtained via the Internet, e-mail, facsimile, telephone, annual publications, and research/journal articles. (See appendix III for contact information.)