



OCCUPATIONAL FATALITY INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- In 2002, more than 5,500 workers were fatally injured at work, an average of 15 each day.
- The direct costs of occupational injuries and illnesses were estimated to be \$45.8 billion in 2001 (2003 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index). The indirect costs were estimated to be an additional \$137.4 to \$229 billion.
- Although data used to track work-related injury deaths are useful for identifying groups at high risk and general causes of these events, more in-depth information is frequently required to understand the circumstances of and contributors to fatal injuries in order to develop effective preventive measures.

WHAT HAS NIOSH ACCOMPLISHED?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) operates the Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program, through which in-depth investigations of work-related fatalities are conducted. Risk factors are identified and strategies to prevent similar deaths are developed and disseminated. FACE investigations are conducted by NIOSH staff in six states and by local investigators in 15 states funded by NIOSH through cooperative agreements. In FY2003, 87 new investigations were conducted that focused on: deaths of youth less than 18 years of age, deaths in roadway construction work zones, deaths involving machinery, and deaths of Hispanic workers. State FACE programs target additional areas for investigation based on the region's pattern of work injury deaths.

In FY1998, a specific program was developed to address fire fighter line-of-duty deaths across the country. The results of these investigations are disseminated nationally throughout the fire service. Fire departments are using these results to improve work practices and procedures at fire scenes and to improve equipment to prevent fire fighter injuries and deaths. In FY2003, 43 new investigations were conducted in 22 states.

Example of program in action:

A law prohibiting the use of people playing the role of victim in fire fighting training involving live fires was signed by New York Governor George Pataki on July 17, 2003. The law resulted from the 2001 death of a fire fighter. The NIOSH investigation of this incident was cited in the justification for this new law.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Although fatality rates are decreasing in many industry sectors and occupational groups, fatal injuries in the workplace still exact a huge toll on the American workforce. Through comprehensive work site investigations, FACE provides strategies for more effective worker injury prevention efforts. FACE is now focusing on identifying risk factors and effective injury prevention strategies for high-risk occupational groups (e.g., adolescent workers, firefighters, and Hispanic workers) and for persons working in unique hazardous environments (e.g., construction work zones).

Additional information is available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/face/faceweb.html and www.cdc.gov/niosh/firehome.html. For more information on other NIOSH programs, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/pib/. March 2004

