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ANALYTICAL ARTICLE:

Is the Fatal Occupational Injury Experience in the United States Really Improving?

Over the 11-year period from 1992 through 2002, the number of fatal occupational injuries in this study declined from just over 6,217 to 5,534, after having reached a peak of 6,632 in 1994. Similarly, the fatal occupational injury rate per 100,000 workers showed a steady decline, with the exception of one slight increase in 1994.

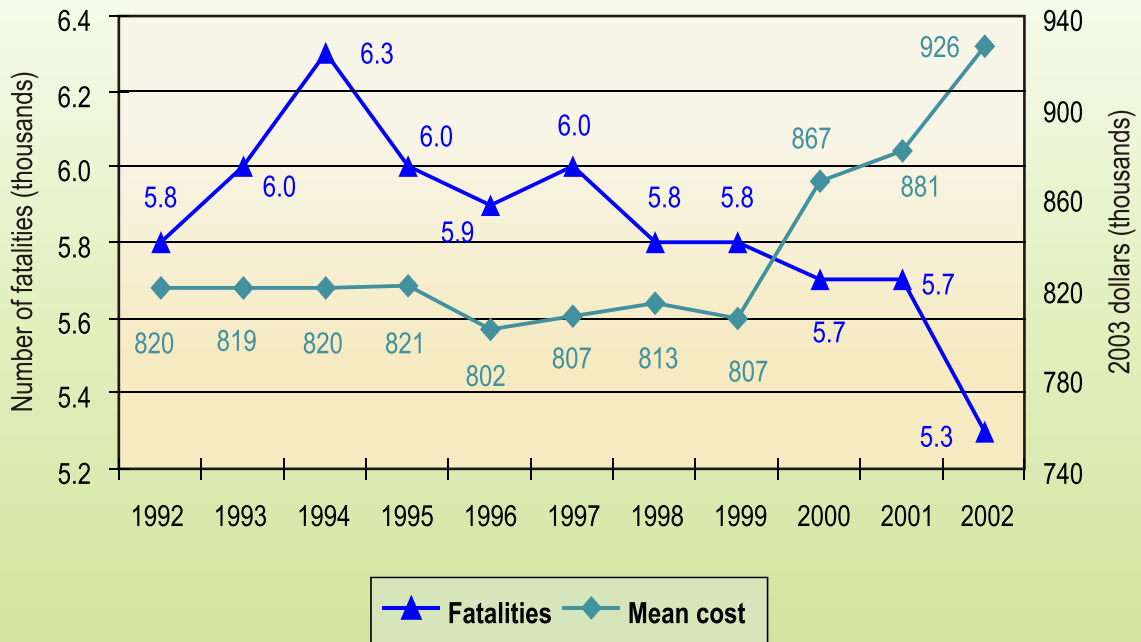
However, while important, the number and rate of fatal occupational injuries are not the only outcome measures. Another measure is the impact of these fatalities on national income measures, such as the GDP. Unfortunately, the decline in numbers and rates of fatalities is not reflected in a reduction in the cost to society and the associated impact on the GDP.

After 8 years of hovering around \$820,000, the average cost to the GDP of a workplace fatality rose dramatically after 1999, reaching \$926,000 in 2002.

Note that counts do not correspond with published BLS numbers because data excluded military personnel, decedents of unknown age or sex, fatalities occurring in New York City, and fatalities from the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.



Number and mean cost of fatal occupational injuries, 1992–2002



SOURCE: Elyce Biddle, PhD., NIOSH. "Is the Fatal Occupational Injury Experience in the United States Really Improving?" (presentation)