

Introduction

The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, the Nation's primary source of data on fatal work injuries, has begun its second decade of operation. The program, which is conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in partnership with State agencies, provides valuable information to make workplaces safer for all workers. This chartbook presents an overview of fatal work injury data from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program for the 5 years from 1995 through 1999. ■ The chartbook presents these data in an easily accessible format—more charts and graphs than text or analysis—that will be useful to anyone interested in learning more about fatal occupational injuries, whether that person is an experienced researcher or an interested observer. It illuminates the details of these fatal injuries from a variety of perspectives.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHARTBOOK

The chartbook is divided into three sections; each begins with a short overview of the data which is followed by more specific data presentations. The **National Profiles** focus on specific types of fatal work injuries, sources of fatal injuries, and specific groups of workers. These topics were selected because they have proven to be of ongoing interest to data users. The **Industry Profiles** present data for each major industry division, including the number and rate of fatal work injuries in that division as well as background on the demographic characteristics of the fatally injured workers and the fatal incidents.

The **State Profiles** section focuses on fatal work injury data for individual States, plus the District of Columbia and New York City. Each profile in this section includes data on the number and rate of fatal incidents, as well as charts and tables showing the types of events, occupations, and industries associated with fatal work injuries in a particular State or location. Summaries of the demographic characteristics of the fatally injured workers also are presented in each State profile.

The appendixes provide contact information for Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries staff in the BLS office in Washington, DC, as well as for the BLS Regional Information Offices and the State agencies. The appendixes also contain technical information regarding the methodology of the fatality census program.

TERMINOLOGY IN THE CHARTBOOK

The terms used throughout this book are consistent with the coding classification language used in the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program. Industrial classifications, for example, are obtained from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's *Standard Industrial Classification Manual, 1987*, and occupation classifications are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 1990 Occupational Classification System.

Terms such as "source" and "event" are taken from the BLS *Occupational Injury and Illness Classification Manual*. Source is defined as "the object, substance,

bodily motion, or exposure that directly produced the injury." Event describes the "manner in which the injury or illness was produced or inflicted." One example of a source of injury would be "automobile," and an event example would be "highway incident." (Those who wish to learn more about the coding structure can access the *Occupational Injury and Illnesses Classification Manual* at www.bls.gov/iif/oshoiics.htm.)

These classification procedures were adopted to standardize statistical reporting across various government agencies and nongovernment data users. This policy minimizes the definitional differences among data, and allows for practical comparisons to be made.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CENSUS OF FATAL OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES

The origins of the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries go back to 1972, when the BLS, in partnership with State agencies, began to collect, compile, and publish occupational injury, illness, and fatality data. In the mid-1980's, BLS asked the National Academy of Sciences to review the Nation's workplace injury and illness data needs, along with the BLS occupa-

tional safety and health statistics program. In its report, the academy cited the Nation's need for improved occupational fatality data, with particular emphasis on obtaining detailed case characteristics on a timely basis. The academy's report went on to recommend that BLS work with State agencies to compile a complete roster of all work-related fatalities by accessing multiple data sources, including death certificates, medical examiner reports, workers' compensation claims, and other reports to Federal and State agencies.

In response to these recommendations, BLS, in conjunction with State agencies, developed the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries. In 1992, the fatality census was implemented in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. Data are collected on a calendar year basis. Preliminary results generally are released about 8 to 9 months after the end of the year for which data were collected.

MULTIPLE SOURCE-DOCUMENT COLLECTION SYSTEM

Much of the success of the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program is attributable to the multiple-source-document collection system used in

the program. Most previous systems used only one source document (such as death certificates) for surveillance of fatal work injuries, or tried to estimate the number of fatalities using sampling methodology. A census based on multiple source documents provides greater accuracy, comprehensiveness, and reliability. The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries collects nearly four source documents, on average, for each fatality. (See appendix I for more information on source documents.)

FINAL THOUGHTS

Comments on this chartbook are encouraged. BLS plans to produce this type of document every 5 years, so any comments on how BLS might improve upon this first effort would be welcome.

