

Oregon work-related deaths up 25-percent from 2007

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — Forty-four people covered by the Oregon's workers' compensation system died on the job during 2008. The new figures were announced today by Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood during his opening remarks of the 2009 Oregon Governor's Occupational Safety and Health (GOSH) Conference at the Oregon Convention Center. The data is compiled by the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS). The 2008 total is a significant increase from 2007's total of 35 fatalities. However, the 2008 figure includes eight workers killed in a firefighting helicopter crash in the Northern California wilderness. The eight workers were among 15 who died in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry. The second highest concentration of deaths was in truck transportation, which accounted for six deaths. Overall, 12 of the deaths — more than 27 percent of the total — were the result of motor vehicle crashes. Oregon is one of just a few states that require workplace motor vehicle accidents to be reported. Since 2007, Oregon OSHA has been analyzing data from the collisions and from employers about the use of vehicles for business and driver safety procedures. The numbers show a dramatic improvement in construction, where there were 12 deaths in 2007. In 2008, five workers died on construction jobs. "I am pleased to see the upward trend in construction deaths didn't continue," said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA administrator. "But five deaths are still too many and I know we can do more to reduce those risks." Historically, the lowest number of workers killed on the job was in 2005, when 31 fatalities occurred. There was an average of 55 workplace deaths per year in Oregon in the 1990s and 81 per year in the 1980s. "We have made great strides in recent decades in reducing deaths as well as workplace injuries and illnesses," said Cory Streisinger, DCBS director. "But, there are still Oregonians who don't get to go home to their families. We must work harder to ensure their safety every day." Oregon OSHA offers educational workshops, consultation services, training videos, and Web site information to help Oregon employers create or improve their safety and health programs. DCBS compiles fatality statistics from records of death claim benefits paid by Oregon workers' compensation insurers during the calendar year. The data reported may exclude workplace fatalities involving self-employed individuals, city of Portland police and fire employees, federal employees, and incidents occurring in Oregon to individuals with out-of-state employers. These workers are either not subject to Oregon workers' compensation coverage requirements or are covered by other compensation systems. Deaths that occur during a prior calendar year may appear in the compensable fatality count for a later year because of the time required to process a claim. Complete data on all deaths caused by injuries in Oregon workplaces, regardless of whether they are covered by workers' compensation insurance, are computed separately and reported in the annual Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) administered by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The 2008 CFOI report is not expected for release until the fall of 2009. ### Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency.

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