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NEWS RELEASE

North Carolina's injury and illness rate drops to new low

North Carolina's private industry continues to improve its injury and illness rate due in large part to efforts statewide to implement stronger workplace safety and health programs. The 2008 annual nonfatal injury and illness rate dropped from 3.7 in 2007 to 3.4 per 100 full-time employees and now rests at a historical low.

The injury and illness rate stood at 4.0 in 2006 and 2005 and was 4.1 in 2004. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics compiles the data. North Carolina's rate continues to be below the national average.

"We use this data to gauge how companies are doing in terms of workplace safety in North Carolina," Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry said. "More and more employers understand that prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses is one sure way to increase their profitability."

Fewer workplace injuries translate to fewer workers' comp claims and a reduction in workers' comp rates. Workers' comp rates have dropped over the past two years.

"Next April workers' comp rates are set to drop 9.6 percent, saving North Carolina employers an estimated \$120 million," Commissioner Berry said. "This news is good for business and good for employees. We hope the cost savings will spur job growth."

Industries experiencing drops in injury and illness rates include construction and manufacturing, two of the state's most hazardous industries. Construction's injury and illness rate dropped from 4.0 in 2007 to 3.7 in 2008, and manufacturing's rate dropped from 4.4 to 4.2.

"Everyone deserves a safe and healthy workplace, and I commend employers and employees for working together to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses," Commissioner Berry said.

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