



NEWS RELEASE

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NCDOL Releases 2008 Fatality Figures

RALEIGH—Figures released by the N.C. Department of Labor today show 56 fatal work accidents in 2008. A spike in the final two months of last year bumped numbers up from 2007—a year that posted an unprecedented low number of workplace fatalities, 45.

“In these tough economic times, we must not allow safety to take a back seat,” Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry said. “To see an increase in the last two months of the year during hard economic times sends a red flag and it is something we will monitor.”

Construction and manufacturing, two of the state’s most hazardous industries, posted a decrease. Construction dropped from 20 in 2007 to 17 in 2008, and manufacturing dropped from 11 to 8.

Fatalities in the service industry increased from 3 fatalities in 2007 to 8 in 2008, and agriculture, forestry and fishing increased from 2 in 2007 to 7 in 2008.

“Our goal is to prevent accidents from happening,” said Allen McNeely, director of the NCDOL Division of Occupational Safety and Health. “When we study annual fatality figures, we are looking for trends or patterns in certain industries. It appears that many of the fatalities involved falls or crushed by-accidents, which can be avoided by using fall protection properly and paying close attention to your surroundings.”

“We take each fatality personally and are saddened by each one,” Commissioner Berry said. “One fatality affects so many people—the family, co-workers, the community. When our workers kiss their loved ones goodbye in the morning, we must make sure that they return home to kiss them goodnight.”

North Carolina employers and employees have made great strides over the past eight years and their efforts have helped put North Carolina on the map as one of the safest states in which to

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work. The latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show private industry currently has a record low injury and illness rate—3.7 injured workers for every 100 full-time employees. The 3.7 rate broke through the 4.0 ceiling that stood for 2005 and 2006. North Carolina was one of only 12 states that improved its injury and illness rates in 2007, the last year of record.

“The injury and illness rate is the single biggest indicator of how we are doing as a state in terms of workplace safety,” Commissioner Berry said. “When we find an industry that has high rates, we include it in our strategic plan as we have done for construction and manufacturing. We then focus on them and lend our assistance through our Bureaus of Education, Training and Technical Assistance and Consultative Services.”

Sixty-four of North Carolina’s counties had no work-related fatalities. Mecklenburg County experienced the most fatalities with six, followed by Dare and Wake Counties with three. Eleven counties had two fatalities. They were Brunswick, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Catawba, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Lee, Onslow, Rowan and Vance. There were 22 counties that experienced one fatality.

Whites accounted for 31 of the 56 workplace deaths. Blacks and Hispanics accounted for 12 each, and Asians for 1. Men accounted for 55 of the 56 workplace fatalities.

The leading cause of the work-related fatalities was being crushed by an object with 17 fatalities, followed by 13 fatalities involving being struck by an object. Twelve suffered fatal slips or falls. Five workers were electrocuted, three died in fire or explosions, and six died in other fatal events.

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