Get the Facts: Workplace Injuries and Illnesses

The leading causes of workplace deaths and nonfatal injuries and illnesses are not always the same. While transportation incidents were the leading cause of workplace death in 2020, exposure to harmful substances or environments was the leading cause of injuries and illnesses involving days away from work, which includes contagious and infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Overexertion (e.g., lifting, pushing, pulling, holding or carrying objects) and bodily reactions have long been the leading cause of work-related injuries and illnesses, with the recent exception of 2020 due to COVID-19. Included below is information to increase awareness of the greatest injury and illness risks on the job.

Top 3 Workplace Injuries and Illnesses Involving Days Away from Work in 2020

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Exposure to harmful substances or environments



424,360

injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work



Injury rate:

43.5 per 10,000 full-time workers



Previously ranked #6:

increased to #1 because of COVID-19 cases



Industry most at risk:

Health care and social assistance



Typical work days lost:

13



Most frequent case type:

Other diseases due to viruses, not elsewhere classified

#2

Overexertion, bodily reaction



255,490

injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work



Injury rate:

26.2 per 10,000 full-time workers



Previously ranked #1:



Age group most at risk:

45 to 64



Industry most at risk:

Transportation and warehousing



Typical work days lost:



Most frequent case type:

Back

#3

Slips, trips and falls



211,640

injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work



Injury rate:

21.7 per 10,000 full-time workers



Age group most at risk:

55 and over



Industry most at risk:

Transportation and warehousing was tied with agriculture for being most at risk



Typical work days lost:

14



Most frequent case type:

Sprains, strains and tears

Visit injuryfacts.nsc.org to get additional detail on workplace injuries and more.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

