

A Review of Construction-Related Fatal Accidents in Ireland

1989-2016



About this report

This report is a summary of the longer document named in the title above. It examines fatal accidents in construction between 1989 and 2016. Both dedicated construction businesses (the Construction sector) and other businesses engaged in construction are included. Examples of other businesses engaged in construction would be farmers building outhouses, county council workers maintaining roads, and so on.



You can view the full report at www.hsa.ie/Construction_Fatality_Report

Why is this report necessary?

Between 1989 and 2016, a total of 1,616 work-related fatal accidents were reported to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA).

Over a quarter of all these fatal accidents involved the construction sector (338) and other businesses engaged in construction activity (102).

Construction accidents, therefore, represent a high proportion of all fatal accidents, so it is important to have a clear understanding of their causes and characteristics. Also, it is hoped that this report will help to put systems in place to reduce work-related accidents in construction in future.

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How was this report completed?

Since the HSA was established in 1989, work-related fatal accidents in Ireland have been investigated by HSA inspectors. These inspectors document their accident investigations in writing. To compile this report, the information from these investigations was recently reviewed and analysed using [European Statistics on Accidents at Work](#) (ESAW) practices (Eurostat, 2013).

What were the findings?

General findings for both the construction sector and non-construction businesses engaged in construction:

- The single most common cause of fatal accidents in both categories was falling from a height – 40% of all deaths in the construction sector, and 49% in non-construction businesses engaged in construction. This includes accidents where the victims themselves fell and accidents where the victim was standing on a structure that collapsed for example, a roof or a ladder.
- Other significant causes of fatal accidents include: losing control of a vehicle; being struck by or crushed by a vehicle; being hit by a falling object; trenches collapsing; electrocution and drowning.
- The rate of fatal accidents was much the same for employees and self-employed people.

Specific findings for the construction sector:

- During the period under review, 338 fatal accidents were reported in the construction sector.
- Of these, 297 were ‘worker’ victims – that is, employees of a construction company or self-employed. All but one of these victims were male. ‘Non-worker’ victims – members of the public – accounted for 41 deaths, of which 10 were female.

- Most worker victims were aged between 20 and 60 years. Non-worker victims represented all age groups from children to older people.
- Most fatal accident victims since 1989 have been Irish males – there were no non-Irish victims before 1995.
- Most fatal accidents (286) happened during normal working hours – 8am to 6pm – with a decline over the 1pm – 2pm lunch hour. A small number happened at night, mostly where members of the public gained access to construction sites.
- The number of fatal accidents generally rose and fell in line with the boom and bust periods in construction. Overall, though, the rate of fatal accidents per 100,000 workers has tended to decline since 1989.

Specific findings for non-construction businesses engaged in construction activity:

- During the period under review, 102 fatal accidents were reported across all other sectors.
- Of these, most (45) were in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, and most were self-employed.
- As with the construction sector, most victims were male – 101 of the 102.
- Almost half of the victims in this category were aged between 40 and 59 years. The next highest age group was the 60-69 years group.
- Most fatal accident victims for the period under review were Irish males.
- In this category, unlike accidents in the construction sector, accidents peaked in 1998 before falling and remaining relatively low during the boom years.

Where can I get further information?

You can get the full version of this document at www.hsa.ie/Construction_Fatality_Report

The full version gives more detailed information about the causes, general trends and patterns of work-related fatal accidents.

You can also download further information on fatal injuries in the workplace from: http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Statistics/Fatal_Injury/

For more information on fatal accidents in agriculture, visit:

http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/Further_Information/Fatal_Accidents/



Further Information and Guidance:

Visit our website at www.hsa.ie, telephone our contact centre on **1890 289 389** or email wcu@hsa.ie

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