Understanding Workplace Fatality Data

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One Workplace Fatality is Always Too Many

At the Workers Compensation Board (WCB), our mission is to build safe and healthy workplaces and support recovery, if and when a work-related injury or illness occurs. When a workplace fatality happens, it deeply affects loved ones, family members, friends and co-workers who are left behind, their lives forever changed. Below is some useful information on workplace fatalities and the WCB.

Understanding Workplace Fatalities

The WCB understands there is often interest in workplace fatalities from media and other individuals. The WCB looks to balance the need for sharing accurate information, communicating prevention measures and protecting the privacy of affected workers and their families at all times.

Accuracy and defining what we are reporting are important, as all workplace fatalities have deep rooted impact on families, communities, co-workers and many others. This is true in all provinces and territories and especially so in Prince Edward Island where families, communities and co-workers are known to be tight-knit.

Communicating prevention measures is also important. When a work-related catastrophic event takes place, the WCB's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Division will communicate appropriate prevention measures, both publicly and to targeted worksites, to help eliminate hazards and prevent further injury. This includes, but is not limited to, hazard alerts, prevention updates, safety talks.

Privacy is equally as important because the WCB is legally required to protect the privacy of workers and their loved ones under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP). Families themselves can choose to release information that belongs to them as they see fit.

Tracking Workplace Fatalities

In Prince Edward Island, the WCB tracks two types of workplace fatalities: fatalities that are covered (compensable) and fatalities that are not covered (non-compensable) as reported to us. This information is reported yearly in our annual report as Total Workplace Fatalities. You can consult annual reports on the WCB website **wcb.pe.ca**

Are there other deaths due to work that are not included in these statistics?

Almost certainly so. These statistics are those workplace fatalities that are reported to the WCB. There could be other deaths the WCB is not made aware of and therefore do not appear in these annual statistics.

What fatalities are compensable and non-compensable under the workers compensation system?

The WCB evaluates each fatality on a case-by-case basis to determine if the fatality is compensable. To be compensable, the fatality must arise out of and in the course of employment. Fatalities that are non-compensable are those that did not arise out of and in the course of employment or arise from exclusions to workers compensation coverage. Benefits payable for compensable fatalities are detailed in legislation, regulations and policies which are available on the WCB website **wcb.pe.ca**

Compensable Fatalities include:

• **Acute Fatalities** which are the result of a work-related catastrophic event. For example, falls, drownings, impact-related deaths like collisions with motor vehicles, among others. Because of their nature, these incidents often receive immediate media attention.

• **Chronic Fatalities** are connected to occupational exposure which often results in chronic diseases such as asbestosis, lung conditions, work-related cancers, or other conditions. These deaths can occur years after the initial occupational exposure took place.

What happens when a death occurs at a worksite?

Usually, the first call is to 911. First responders respond to the site. The WCB's OHS Division is notified and an OHS Officer is dispatched in order to conduct an investigation. **In PEI, employers are required by law to immediately report serious workplace injuries – including fatalities – and explosions to the WCB.** They can do so by calling the WCB's 24/7 Occupational Health and Safety Emergency Line at 902-628-7513.

How does PEI compare to other Canadian provinces and territories?

Each province and territory handles fatalities differently. With that in mind, comparing one to another should consider the different definitions that may be in use.

The Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC) maintains a comparative list of workplace deaths which are compensable, and therefore the list does not paint a complete picture of fatalities in PEI. Nonetheless, the database is the best comparison tool, at present, of compensable workplace fatalities across provinces and territories.

For more information on AWCBC statistics, visit **awcbc.org**

What other supports are available to families suffering the impact of workplace fatality?

Threads of Life is a national charity dedicated to supporting families during this very challenging time, and to providing an ongoing network of support. The WCB works closely with Threads of Life and provides workers, or their families, with information on the services it offers. The learn more, visit **threadsoflife.ca**

For more information

We invite you to visit the WCB's website **wcb.pe.ca** if you would like more information. You can also call the WCB at **902-368-5680** or toll-free in Atlantic Canada at **1-800-237-5049**.