

Roadway crashes are the leading cause of occupational fatalities in the U.S.

Between 1992 and 2001, 13,337 civilian workers died in roadway crashes, an average of 4 deaths each day. Roadway crashes led all other causes, making up 22% of workplace deaths, compared with 13% from homicide and 10% from falls (*Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries*).

In 2000, lost wages and benefits for crash victims (occupational and non-occupational) were \$61 billion. Costs to employers due to the loss or absence of an employee from work accounted for \$4.6 billion more (*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*). For employers and victims, a workplace crash can have far-reaching financial, medical, and legal consequences.

Who is at risk? – Anyone who operates a motor vehicle as part of his or her job is at risk of being involved in a roadway crash.

In 2001, nearly 4.2 million U.S. workers were motor vehicle operators; 73% were truck drivers. Roadway crashes are by far the leading cause of death for transport workers. Millions of other workers who are not full-time professional drivers operate company or personal vehicles for deliveries, sales and repair calls, client visits, and many other tasks. Roadway crashes are also the leading cause of death for workers in clerical and professional specialty jobs, and the second leading cause for executives, sales workers, and technicians. (*Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries*)



Photo by NIOSH FACE Program

Actions of other motorists may cause work-related crashes

During a non-emergency medical transport, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician (EMT) died when the ambulance she was in was struck head-on by a pickup truck traveling in excess of 70 miles per hour in the wrong lane of a two-lane roadway. Attending a patient, the EMT was unrestrained when the incident occurred. The EMT struck the front bulkhead and died of head and chest injuries en route to the hospital.

NIOSH FACE Report 2001-11

What can employers do?

Unlike other workplaces, the roadway is not a closed environment. Preventing work-related roadway crashes requires strategies that combine traffic safety principles and sound safety management practices. Although employers cannot control roadway conditions, they can promote safe driving behavior by providing safety information to workers and by setting and enforcing driver safety policies. Crashes are not an unavoidable part of doing business. Employers can take steps to protect their employees and their companies:

Policies

- Assign a key member of the management team responsibility and authority to set and enforce comprehensive driver safety policy.
- Enforce mandatory seat belt use.
- Do not require workers to drive irregular hours or far beyond their normal working hours.
- Do not require workers to conduct business on a cell phone while driving.
- Develop work schedules that allow employees to obey speed limits and to follow applicable hours-of-service regulations.

Fleet Management

- Adopt a structured vehicle maintenance program.
- Provide company vehicles that offer the highest possible levels of occupant protection.

Safety Programs

- Teach workers strategies for recognizing and managing driver fatigue and in-vehicle distractions.
- Provide training to workers operating specialized motor vehicles or equipment.
- Emphasize to workers the need to follow safe driving practices on and off the job.

Driver Performance

- Ensure that workers assigned to drive on the job have a valid driver's license and one that is appropriate for the type of vehicle to be driven.
- Check driving records of prospective employees, and perform periodic rechecks after hiring.
- Maintain complete and accurate records of workers' driving performance.

Work-related roadway crashes, 1992-2001

Types of vehicles occupied by victims:

- Semi-trucks (28%)
- Automobiles (24%)
- Pickup trucks (12%)

Event and worker characteristics:

- 49% were collisions between vehicles
- 53% occurred between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- 38% occurred on U.S. or State-designated highways
- 89% of fatally injured workers were male
- Risk of fatality increased at age 55 and older

Industries in which victims were employed:

- Transportation (33%)
- Services (14%)
- Construction (11%)

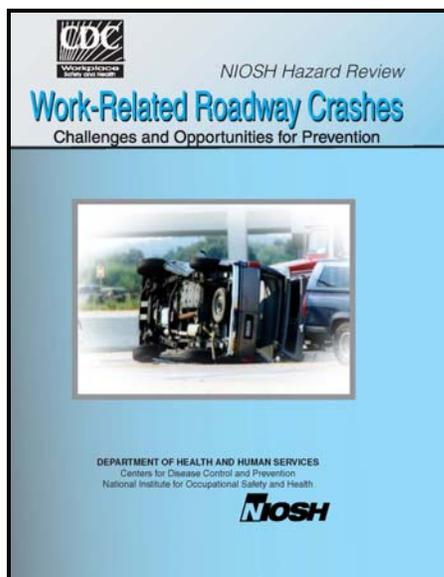
Unsafe driving and lack of employer enforcement of safety policies may contribute to fatal work-related crashes

A 45-year-old salesperson was killed in a motor-vehicle incident while traveling to meet with clients. The victim had worked for the company for six years and was reimbursed for mileage and other costs associated with the use of his personal vehicle for work-related driving. Traveling in excess of 90 miles per hour along an interstate highway, he lost control of his car and was ejected when the vehicle became airborne and rolled two and a half times. The victim, who was not wearing a seatbelt, died at the scene. In the previous 14 months, he had been involved in another motor-vehicle incident and had committed three other speeding violations.

FACE Report 93WY006

Roadway safety information

NIOSH Hazard Review: Work-Related Roadway Crashes



DHHS [NIOSH] Publication No. 2003-119

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-119/pdfs/2003-119.pdf

Work-related Roadway Crashes provides detailed statistics on workplace crashes; a review of safety regulations that affect workplace driving; information on special topics such as driver fatigue, cell phone use, and age factors; and recommendations for prevention of work-related crashes.

To receive copies of the NIOSH Hazard Review, copies of this Fact Sheet, or additional information, please visit the NIOSH Web site at www.cdc.gov/niosh or contact us by phone at:

1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

Links to Work-related Roadway Safety Information*

- NIOSH—Motor Vehicles:
www.cdc.gov/niosh/injury/traumamv.html
- Federal Highway Administration:
www.fhwa.dot.gov
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:
www.fmcsa.dot.gov
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations:
www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_02/49cfrv4_02.html#301/
- Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards:
www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_02/49cfrv5_02.html#501
- Network of Employers for Traffic Safety:
www.trafficsafety.org
- Insurance Institute for Highway Safety:
www.hwysafety.org
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety:
www.aaafoundation.org/home/

*Mention of any company or product does not constitute endorsement by NIOSH. In addition, citations to Web sites do not constitute NIOSH endorsement of the sponsoring organizations or their programs or products. Furthermore, NIOSH is not responsible for the content of these Web sites.

