

**Department of Commerce
Occupational Safety and Health Program
Report**



December 2005

**Department of Commerce
Office of Occupational Safety and Health
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Executive Summary

The monthly Occupational Safety and Health report provides an overview of the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. The report is based on the latest available data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims and results of bureau evaluations.

Accidents are being reported with our first analysis done for this monthly report.

Additional work was done to analysis workers' compensation data. The cost of workers' compensation continues to go down and is slightly above the trend line for costs. The fatal accidents are also slightly above the trend. With 0 fatal accidents in 2005 the one death in 2006 is in excess of the trend.

The number of workers' compensation claims filed for November 2005 was up slightly from the same month of 2004. The total number of claims for Fiscal Year 2005 was down. The number of claims for November was at the trend line.

The SHARE initiative continues to be tracked and the Department all goals with the exception of loss production days. In spite of a lot of work in this area lost production days increased over 2004. Work will continue in this area.

This month's report includes an update on the initiatives to reduce the cost of workers' compensation to the Department. Several initiatives are on-going with more to begin in the next quarter. The focus for this effort is to identify claimants who have the ability to return to work.

Finally in this report is information about exercising. The health section provides information on the solutions to health problems found in exercise.

December Report

Purpose. This report is developed each month to provide information about the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. The report is based on the latest available workers' compensation data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims. Wellness information is also provided to assist employees in preparing for the holiday season. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health publicizes the hazards and recommendations in this report using the Department's web page. It will also work with bureau safety offices to further analyze the data and implement recommendations as appropriate for each bureau.

Discussion.

Accident Reporting. The Department experienced 23 Recordable accidents in Fiscal Year 2005. Those accidents resulted in 1 death and 125 lost work days. The trend was slips and falls. There is no base year for recordable accidents.

Statistics. The Department of Commerce Occupational Safety and Health program covered the Department's workforce and workplaces worldwide to include our shipboard, aviation and international workforces. The number of personnel employed in 2005 was 37,601.

The Department reported 462 injury and illness cases in Fiscal Year 2005, 216 of which were lost time cases. This represents an 11 percent decrease of injury and illness claims and a 4 percent decrease of lost time claims from 2004. The injury and illness case rate for Fiscal Year 2005 was 1.23 and the lost time case rate was 0.57.

The Department incurred one occupational fatality in Fiscal Year 2005; the employee was with the Bureau of the Census, as a Field Representative. The employee died as a result of injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident. The police report indicated that the victim was wearing a seat belt. The victim was cited for failing to yield the right of way to an oncoming vehicle. Figure 1 shows fatal accident data for previous years.

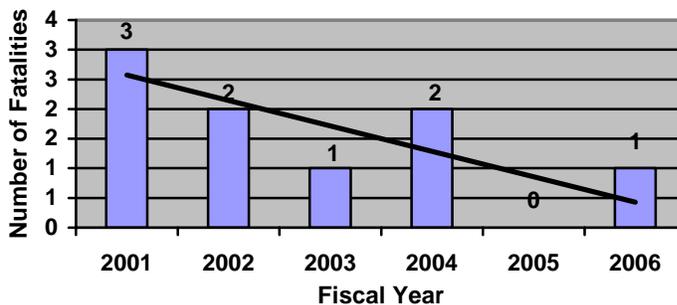


Figure 1 Total number of fatalities for the past five fiscal years.

Department workers' compensation costs for Fiscal Year 2005 were \$14,426,435. This is a decrease of 1.2 percent from Fiscal Year 2004. Figure 2 shows previous fiscal year costs.

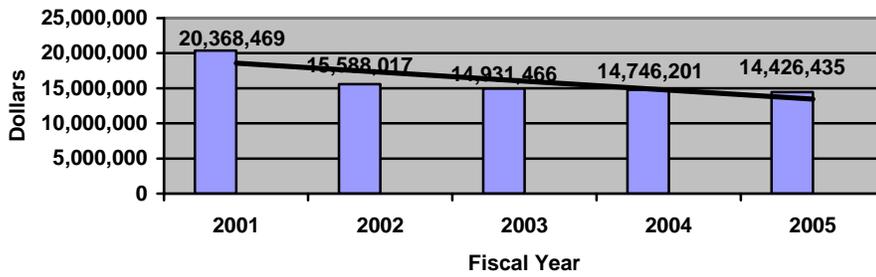


Figure 2 Workers' compensation costs for the past five fiscal years.

Continuation of Pay costs for Fiscal Year 2005 increased slightly from Fiscal Year 2004. Figure 3 shows the costs for previous years.

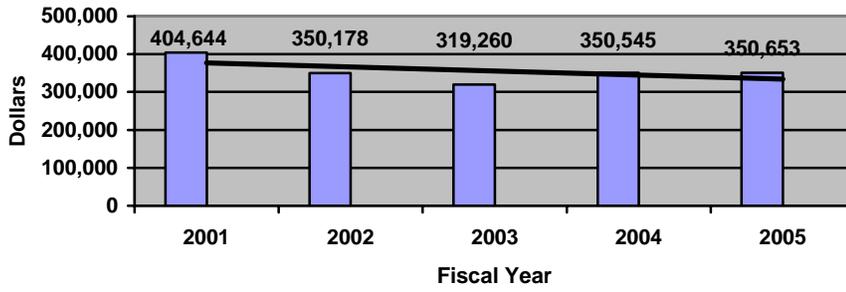


Figure 3 Continuation of Pay costs for the past four fiscal years.

The main causes of injuries within the Department changed in Fiscal Year 2005 from those experienced in Fiscal Year 2004. Figure 4 shows a break down of causes of injuries from Fiscal Year 2005.

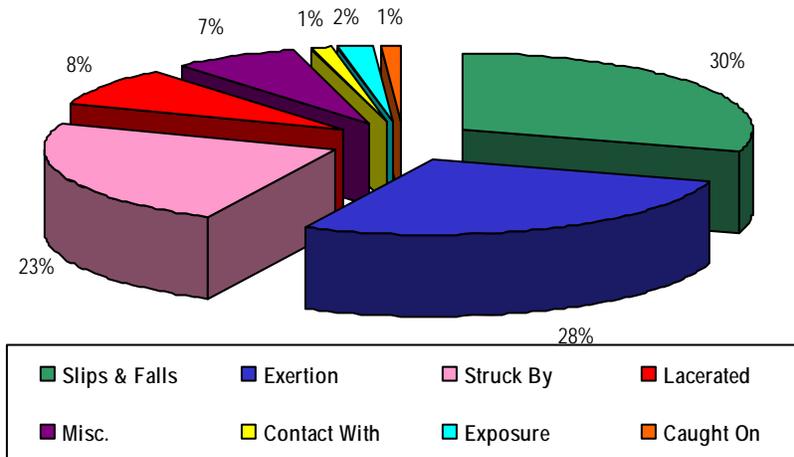


Figure 4 Injury Type As A Percentage of Total Injuries for Fiscal Year 2004.

Safety, Health, and Return to Employment Initiative. During Fiscal Year 2005 the Department met and exceeded the Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) goals of increased timeliness for filings, reduced lost time and total case rates. Table 1 provides a complete look at targets and goals for Fiscal Year 2005.

US Department of Commerce SHARE Goals	FY 03 Baseline	FY 04 Target	FY 04 Actual	FY 05 Target	FY 05 Actual	FY 06 Target	FY 06 Actual
Lost Production Days (Reduce 1% Each)	19.8	19.6	20.2	19.4	21.0	19.2	
CA-1/CA-2 Timeliness (Reduce 5% Each)	34.0%	35.7%	56.7%	37.5%	53.5%	39.4%	
Total Case Rate (Reduce 3% Each)	1.46	1.42	1.39	1.38	1.23	1.34	
Lost Time Case Rate (Reduce 3% Each)	0.70	0.68	0.60	0.66	0.57	0.64	

Table 1 SHARE performance for Fiscal Year 04 compared to Fiscal Year 04 targets.

Worker’s Compensation Claims Analysis. Workers’ Compensation Claim Data tells us that the Monthly Total Recordable Case Incident Rate held steady from October to November after two months of downward movement. The November 2005 rate is slightly higher than the November 2004 rate. Over time the actual rate is inconsistent. The Department objective is to have the actual rate for each month below the trend line. Novembers rate is right at the trend line, see figure 5.

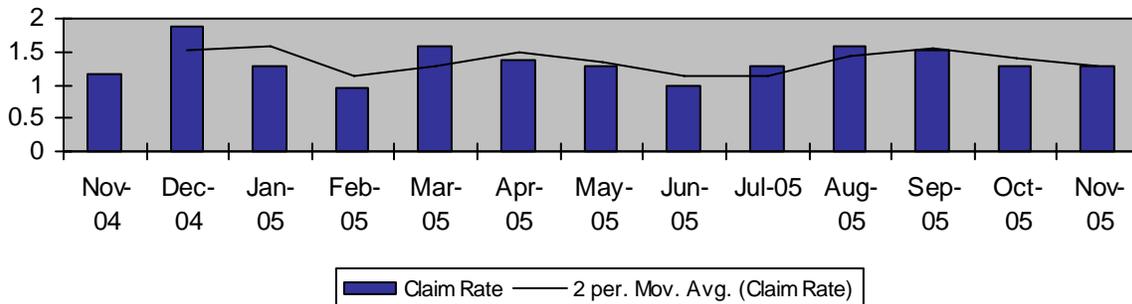


Figure 5. Monthly Total Recordable Workers’ Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

The annual Total Case Incidence Rate is down from previous years. The rate for Fiscal Year 2005 is 1.55. The downward trend must continue to an incident rate of half that experienced in Fiscal Year 2005 to 0.76 claims per 100 employees, see figure 2.

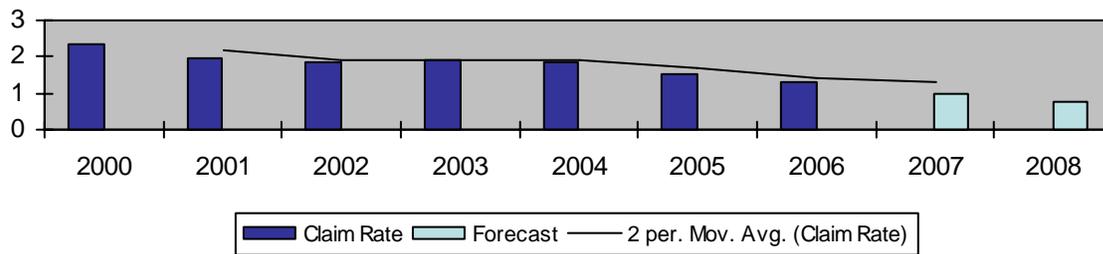


Figure 6. Total Workers' Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

Workers Compensation Claims Management Initiatives. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health continues to implement the overall program improvement plan. The updated project plan is attached to this report. Additional claims have been referred to the Office of Inspector General for investigation. Numerous requests have also been made of the Department of Labor to provide information on cases to enable determinations about returning employees to work.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health continues to work on a list of workers' compensation claims with third party involvement. A comparison was made between the Department of Labor Chargeback List and the Social Security Death Rolls. Three claimants who are currently drawing compensation are listed as dead. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health requested the Department of Labor to investigate these claims to identify if the claimant is dead.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is behind on the third party review of cases due to the difficulty of identifying those cases that have a third party involvement in the Department of Labor query system. The office is also behind on reviewing 30 case files per week. The average reviewed has been 12. Work continues to correct both these issues and get the plan back on the time line.

Department of Labor Initiative. The Department of Labor does not have the year-end data for the Safety, Health and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative that prevents the Department from determining its success with the goals for Fiscal Year 2005. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will continue to work with the Department of Labor to get this information.

Bureau Evaluations. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health conducted the annual bureau assessment for the Office of Inspector General.

Health and Wellness. The topic for this month's health and wellness section is "Exercise" and the key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The Problem. Many of today's illnesses or conditions are exacerbated by a lack of exercise. To make matters worse the person who does not exercise runs the risk of becoming overweight and harming their health even more. Studies show that moderate exercise three times a week for at least 20 minutes can significantly improve one's health.

The Facts.

- Cardiopulmonary exercise works the heart which is a muscle making it stronger.
- The same exercise that works the heart can also reduce high blood pressure.
- Walking is one of the best exercises and can be done with no special equipment virtually anywhere one happens to be.
- Stretching before and after exercising can reduce the potential for injury.
- Consuming water prior to and during exercise can reduce dehydration and put vital amounts of water into the body.

The Solution. Plan an exercise regime that fits one's needs and schedule. Walking is the easiest and perhaps the cheapest exercise. It can be done most anywhere and in any weather. For several years now senior citizens have been using the local mall to walk during inclement weather.

- Pick an exercise or two and set up a schedule to perform the exercise three times a week for at least 20 minutes.
 - Putting this on a calendar, in a personal assistant device, or computer may help.
 - Don't let minor issues distract from this valuable time.
 - Pick a night of the week with few distractions.
- Stretch before and after exercising to warm up and cool down. Stretching also limbers the body and often makes the exercise more enjoyable.
- Do the exercises correctly, don't slouch, do fewer than is best, and don't take the easy way out.
- Various 12 step recovery programs have literally helped millions of people since they began in the mid 1930's. These recovery programs are virtually all founded on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as AA. These recovery programs believe that alcoholism is a disease of both the mind and the body and through the use of group counseling and support a person can control their use of alcohol.

Summary. Start the New Year off right with a commitment to one's health is the best gift that can be given.

Future health and wellness topics will include:

January 2006 – Stress

February 2006 – Outdoor Safety

March 2006 – Water Safety