

**Department of Commerce  
Occupational Safety and Health Program  
Fiscal Year 2005 Annual Agency Report**



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**Department of Commerce**

**Occupational Safety and Health Program  
Fiscal Year 2005 Annual Agency Report**

Fiscal Year:	2005
Name of Agency Department	Department of Commerce Office of Occupational Safety and Health, Office of Human Resources Management
Address	1401 Constitution Avenue, NW Room 5111 Washington, DC 20230
Number of employees covered by this report	37,641
Name of individual responsible for the Department Of Commerce Occupational Safety and Health Program Designated Agency Safety and Health Official	Otto J. Wolff Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW Room 5830 Washington, DC 20230 (202) 482-4951
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**Introduction.** This report provides the Occupational Safety and Health Administration with a review of the Department of Commerce’s Safety Program for Fiscal Year 2005. The Department realized great improvement in the effectiveness of its occupational safety and health program. Additional resources were provided to programs to allow for an assertive focus on returning injured or ill employees to work once they have recovered. There remain challenges and the Department has established goals to improve in those areas. Senior leadership is focused on this program and is providing necessary resources to make the program successful. In Fiscal Year 2006 the Department will focus on three objectives. These objectives include: reducing workplace injuries and illnesses, a review of all worker’s compensation claims for return to work potential, and increase the number of recovered workers returned to work.

**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 37,641.

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 did not experience an occupational fatality in Fiscal Year 2005. Figure 1 shows fatal accident data for previous years. This performance met the trend line for this category of accident.

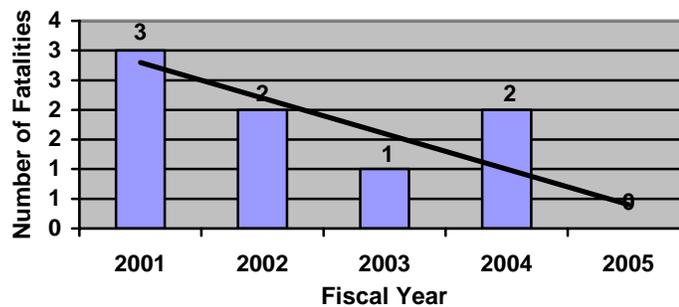


Figure 1 Total number of fatalities for the past five fiscal years.

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.

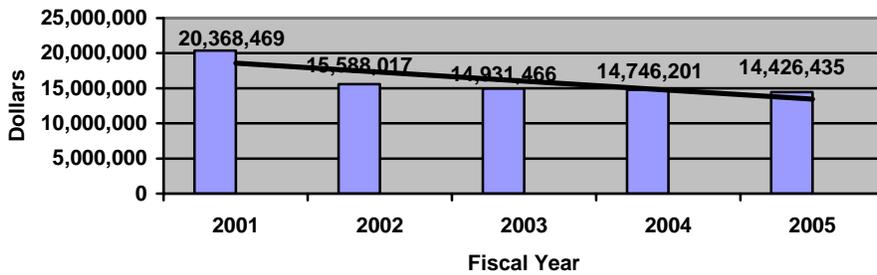


Figure 2 Workers' compensation costs for the past five fiscal years.

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

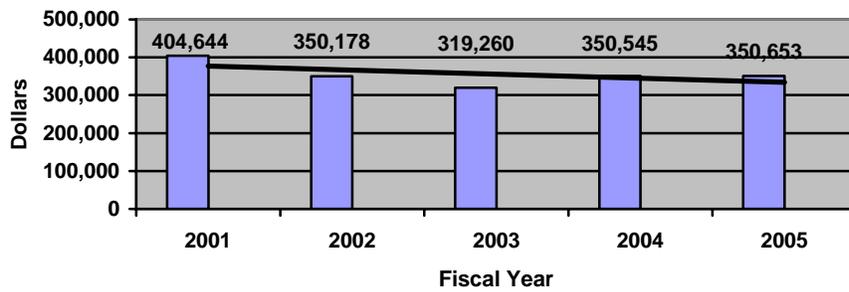


Figure 3 Continuation of Pay costs for the past four fiscal years.

Figure 4 shows a break down of causes of injuries from Fiscal Year 2005.

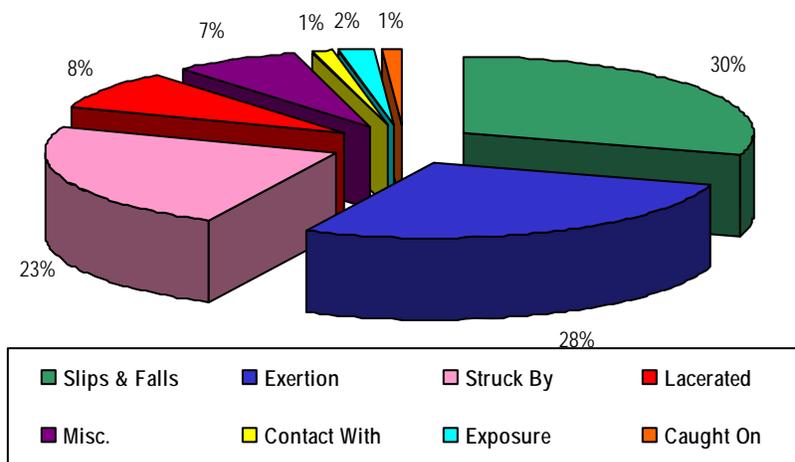


Figure 4 Injury Type As A Percentage of Total Injuries for Fiscal Year 2005

**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 Year)	19.8	19.6	20.2	19.4	21.0	19.2	
CA-1/CA-2 Timeliness (Reduce 5% Each Year)	34.0%	35.7%	56.7%	37.5%	53.5%	39.4%	
Total Case Rate (Reduce 3% Each Year)	1.46	1.42	1.39	1.38	1.23	1.34	
Lost Time Case Rate (Reduce 3% Each Year)	0.70	0.68	0.60	0.66	0.57	0.64	

Table 1 SHARE performance for Fiscal Year 05 compared to Fiscal Year 05 targets.

The Department received the Gold Star award from the Department of Labor (DOL) for improved timeliness of reporting for Fiscal Year 2005. This improvement was achieved through focus on the processing of workers’ compensation claims from the employee to the DOL.

Despite decreases in occupational injuries and illness, including lost time incidents, the Department did not meet the Fiscal Year 2004 SHARE goal for lost production days. These findings are in conflict with other SHARE statistics and the Department has undertaken an aggressive review of worker’s compensation cases to identify causes and corrective measures to reduce the number of lost production days.

**Motor Vehicle/Seat Belt Safety.** The Commerce Department continued to emphasize the use of seat belts in Fiscal Year 2005. All Commerce employees are required to wear seat belts while on official government business. The Commerce Department also strongly encourages employees to wear seat belts in their personal vehicle, encourage family members to always wear seat belts, and use child restraint systems for their children also.

The main focus of seat belt initiatives is at the Census Bureau and aim at reducing injuries from car accidents to field representatives. The Census Bureau and the Field Directors emphasize:

- Training field representatives in safe driving techniques.
- Providing frequent safety tips to field representatives to remind them that seat belt usage is mandatory while operating motor vehicles in the performance of official duties.

- Observing employee driving behavior as part of the annual field representative's supervisory observations.
- Updating field manuals and training materials to include specific language about the requirement to wear seat belts while operating a motor vehicle and that failure to wear seat belts may result in disciplinary action.
- Using safe driving checklist in the Observation/Evaluation Checklist for field representatives used by senior representatives and supervisors to evaluate driving skills and identify any unsafe driving acts.

At the National Institute for Standards and Technology employees continue to be reminded to wear seat belts as they enter the facilities either verbally by the guard force or by signs. The guard force at both the Gaithersburg, Maryland and Boulder, Colorado facilities have the authority to issue citations for failure to wear seat belts. The National Institute for Standards and Technology is a certified member of the Maryland T-SAFE Project. Both T-SAFE and the Maryland Department of Transportation had booths at the annual training and awareness event at Gaithersburg, Maryland in June 2005.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration continued motor vehicle safety training emphasizing seat belt usage. In addition to the annual inspections by the General Services Administration, the National Ocean Service requires that all vehicles are to be inspected once a year to ensure each vehicle is maintained for safe operation.

**Occupational Safety and Health Training.** Extensive safety and occupational health training was conducted in Fiscal Year 2005 throughout the Department. Selected examples include:

- At the National Institute of Standards and Technology a major safety and occupational health training and awareness event, Safety Day, was held at their Gaithersburg, MD facility. This event included speakers covering a wide range of topics, including the White House SHARE initiative. Eighteen vendors demonstrated a variety of products and services. Over 500 employees attended the event, including the Department's Designated Agency Safety and Health Official, Assistant Secretary Otto J. Wolff.
- A wide range of additional training was conducted at National Institute of Standards and Technology facilities in Fiscal Year 2005. This training included radiation safety, overhead crane operation, Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation, and New Employee Safety Orientation.
- The Bureau of Economic Analysis provided quarterly Ergonomic Training. Automatic External Defibrillator and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation training was also provided. In addition, supervisor's safety, health and workers compensation training was provided.
- International Trade Administration provided computer based safety training for all new employees.

- The Minority Business Development Agency provided supervisor's safety, health, and workers' compensation training for its supervisors and managers. The course was held in Washington DC but through the use of teleconference it was provided to managers around the nation.
- The Census Bureau participated in several divisional All-Hands meetings and provided training for regional supervisors and administrators. Safe driver training was also provided to all field representatives.
- At the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine and Aircraft Operations Group a one-week conference focusing on maritime and aviation safety was held. Safety training was also provided to seagoing personnel to meet International Maritime Organization and U.S. Coast Guard requirements.
- Additional training conducted at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration included the development of a web-based Safety Refresher Course for the National Weather Service and a newly initiated Safety Week for the National Marine Sanctuaries to be held in March each year. Safety Week training included intense hands-on instruction and drills such as man overboard exercises, vessel evacuation drills, and emergency response to earthquakes and fires.
- At the Department's headquarters in the Herbert C. Hoover Building safety training was provided for Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation, use of Automated External Defibrillators, and use of evacuation chairs. A 32 hours general industry course was held for all collateral duty safety personnel as well as a one day course in hazard control management for professional safety personnel. Supervisor's training in safety, health, and workers' compensation was provided several times.

**Occupational Safety and Health Program Accomplishments and Initiatives.** Numerous Occupational Safety and Health program accomplishments and initiatives were implemented throughout the Department of Commerce in Fiscal Year 2005 to address accident trends and increase safety awareness. Examples of these accomplishments and initiatives include:

- The Bureau of Economic Analysis installed Automatic External Defibrillators and Evacuation chairs throughout its building in Washington, DC. Training on the use of this equipment was provided to bureau personnel. The Bureau of Economic Analysis conducted a comprehensive base line safety and health survey of their facility. Actions are being taking to correct hazards.
- The Economic Development Administration conducted a comprehensive base line safety and health survey of their areas within the Herbert C. Hoover Building. Actions are being taken to correct hazards.
- Oversight assessments were conducted of four Commerce bureaus to assess the effectiveness of programs and determine the level of compliance. A report of findings was provided to each bureau following the assessments. An assessment analysis and lessons learned for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 was provided to each bureau.

- A web-based accident/illness reporting system used by the National Weather Service was expanded to all of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The new reporting system assists managers in analyzing the major causes of accidents/illnesses, identifies locations where significant numbers of accidents/illnesses are occurring, and aids in reducing workers' compensation costs.
- Bureau Safety Managers formed a working group to provide support to the Department Safety and Health Committee. This working group meets monthly and often through the use of teleconference and webX technology.
- The membership of the Department Safety and Health Council was changed to one level above the bureau safety managers and is a distinct display of leadership involvement in the safety and health program.
- The Department published a Human Resources bulletin establishing a policy of reduced thresholds for reporting of accidents and injuries and includes requirements to report hazardous material incidents. A copy is at appendix A.
- The Department published a Human Resources Bulletin #018, dated November 29, 2005 establishing a policy returning employees on workers' compensation to work. A copy is at appendix B.
- The Office of Inspector General conducted a thorough evaluation of the Department's workers' compensation program. Results to be published in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2006.
- The Department has increased its review of workers' compensation claims. Nineteen claims were sent to the Department's Office of Inspector General for fraud investigation, 183 inquires were made for third party reimbursement of injury costs, and a review is underway of all claim files to determine return to work potential of each claimant.
- The Bureau of the Census has begun working on prevention efforts for Decennial 2010 when it will hire thousands of temporary employees to conduct the census. Two meetings with DOL have been held and the Department and the bureau are identifying potential sources of training, hazard identification, and accident prevention to reduce or eliminate accidents and workers' compensation cases.

**Major Resources Allocated to the Occupational Safety and Health Program.** At the Department a full time position was funded to allow for a second workers' compensation specialist. In addition, money was again allocated to fund the review of 74 long term workers' compensation cases in an attempt to return recovered employees to work. An Executive Leadership and Development Program participant was provided to the Office of Occupational Safety and Health to develop a database for workers' compensation claims.

**Occupational Safety and Health Goals, Plans and Objectives Planned for Fiscal Year 2006 and Beyond.** Starting in Fiscal Year 2006 and thereafter the Department will take a different approach. Objectives have been established to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the

safety, health, and workers' compensation programs. These objectives include: review all worker's compensation claims for return to work potential, increase the number of recovered workers returned to work, and reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. Accomplishing these three objectives will not only reduce the number of accidents experienced by employees it will meet the four Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) initiatives.

The Department will continue its efforts to return employees on long-term compensation to work thereby reducing long-term workers' compensation cases and lowering overall compensation costs. Each long-term compensation case will be thoroughly reviewed and updated medical reports will be appropriately examined to determine whether employees are able to return to work. Additionally, the Department will also work with the bureaus to identify light duty work for those employees who cannot resume working at full capacity.

The Department will complete the following tasks:

- Conduct quarterly reviews of the Social Security Death Rolls to identify workers' compensation claimants that have died and notify the DOL so compensation will cease.
- Conduct quarterly reviews of the DOL Agency Query System to identify third party involvement and identify sources of reimbursement.
- Conduct a complete review of all claim files identifying potential to return to work.
- Implement a hiring team composed of safety, health, human resources management, and supervisors to assist employees out on worker's compensation in returning to work.
- Request the Office of Inspector General investigate each case that has potential fraud.
- Coordinate an agency wide effort to return employees to work if a job is not available in their bureau.
- Emphasize base line surveys of each workplace.
- Conduct an assessment of no less than four bureaus each year to identify lessons learned and benchmarks to raise the performance of all bureaus within the Department.

Summary.

This report was intended to provide the Acting Director of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration with a roll up the accomplishments of the Department of Commerce in the area of occupational safety and health for Fiscal Year 2005. The commitment, dedication, and effort of our employees are evident in all that we do. In Fiscal Year 2006 our leaders are committed to preventing accidents and increasing the number of recovered workers returned to work, and reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. Fiscal Year 2006 holds a great deal of promise. The Department's Report for 2006 will demonstrate its commitment to and fulfillment of providing a safe and healthful working environment for the men and women of the Department of Commerce.