

# STATISTICAL REPORT NOTIFIED FATALITIES

JULY 2004 TO DECEMBER 2004



**Australian Government**

**Department of Employment and  
Workplace Relations**

Office of the Australian Safety and  
Compensation Council



## SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis of data on work-related deaths notified to OHS jurisdictions under their relevant OHS legislation in the period 1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004.

During this period:

- > There were 86 notified work-related fatalities consisting of 77 workers and nine by-standers (see Table 1).
- > The majority of the fatalities were male (77) with eight female fatalities. Gender was not identified for one worker fatality. Five of the female fatalities were by-standers.
- > A quarter (25%) of all worker fatalities with known age were 55 years or older, although workers in this age group comprise only about 12% of the Australian labour force.
- > More than half (56%) of the fatality notifications received were for workers employed in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing, Construction and Transport and storage industries.
- > More than a quarter (28%) of all notified fatalities occurred at a workplace primarily engaged in Agriculture, forestry and fishing with a further 16% in Transport and storage, 13% in Construction and 8% in Mining.
- > There were 24 fatalities to vehicle accidents, five of which were bystanders (see Table 1). Most work-related transport fatalities are not notified to OHS jurisdictions and are therefore not reflected in these figures.
- > Crushing (17 fatalities) and electrocution (10 fatalities) were the most common causes of fatality unrelated to a vehicle.

**Table 1: Notified fatalities—Australia July 2004 to December 2004**

| Place of fatality       | Worker    | By-stander | Total     |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| At workplace (non-road) | 58        | 4          | 62        |
| Vehicle accident (road) | 19        | 5          | 24        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>77</b> | <b>9</b>   | <b>86</b> |

## INTRODUCTION

NOHSC began collecting notifications of work-related fatalities from Australian OHS authorities on 1 July 2003, with the aim of providing more timely information on work-related fatalities in Australia. These notifications cover employees, self-employed workers and by-standers who suffered a fatal injury at work or as the result of work activity.

Data used in this report are derived from notifications to Australian OHS authorities of work-related deaths. All Australian OHS legislation requires notification of work-related deaths. It should be noted that the definition of a work-related death is not consistent across these pieces of legislation. These differences lead to the following anomalies:

- > several jurisdictions do not include work-related deaths due to traffic accidents in their notification systems. These fatalities are instead collected by the police; and
- > plane crash fatalities are not notified to all jurisdictions. These fatalities are notified to the relevant transport authority.

Despite these differences, this report provides a useful analysis of recent work-related deaths in Australia. Other sources of information on work-related death used by NOHSC include the National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics (NDS) and the National Coroners' Information System (NCIS).

**Table 2: Summary of the major elements included in the three available data sources**

| Data source         | Unit of measurement                            | Workers   |               | Bystanders | Availability from reference period |
|---------------------|--|-----------|---------------|------------|------------------------------------|
|                     |  | Employees | Self-employed |            |                                    |
| Notified fatalities | Fatality notifications                         | yes       | yes           | yes        | 3 months                           |
| NDS                 | Accepted fatality workers' compensation claims | yes       | no            | no         | 12 to 18 months                    |
| NCIS                | Coronial investigations                        | yes       | yes           | yes        | Up to 2 years                      |

**Table 3: Number of notified fatalities by industry, July 2004 to December 2004**

| Industry                              | Industry of workplace |            |           | Industry of employer <sup>a</sup> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
|                                       | Worker                | By-stander | Total     | Worker                            |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing     | 24                    | 0          | 24        | 24                                |
| Transport and storage                 | 14                    | 0          | 14        | 12                                |
| Construction                          | 10                    | 1          | 11        | 12                                |
| Government administration and defence | 7                     | 1          | 8         | 8                                 |
| Personal and other services           | 4                     | 0          | 4         | 6                                 |
| Mining                                | 6                     | 1          | 7         | 5                                 |
| Manufacturing                         | 2                     | 1          | 3         | 0                                 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply     | 2                     | 1          | 3         | 1                                 |
| Retail trade                          | 2                     | 1          | 3         | 2                                 |
| Communication services                | 0                     | 3          | 3         | 0                                 |
| Cultural and recreational services    | 2                     | 0          | 2         | 2                                 |
| Property and business services        | 2                     | 0          | 2         | 3                                 |
| Accommodation, cafes and restaurants  | 1                     | 0          | 1         | 1                                 |
| Not applicable                        | 1                     | 0          | 1         |                                   |
| Finance and insurance                 | 0                     | 0          | 0         | 1                                 |
| Not a workplace                       | 0                     | 0          | 0         |                                   |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>77</b>             | <b>9</b>   | <b>86</b> | <b>77</b>                         |

a Industry of employer is not applicable for by-standers

The NDS fatalities data include all accepted compensation fatality claims in each financial year based on the date of lodgement of the claim.

The NCIS is a national internet-based data storage and retrieval system for coronial cases in Australia, and provides coroners with access to relevant case information to inform their investigations. Work related cases comprise only a small portion of the NCIS collection, however, these can be identified using a 'work-relatedness' code and/or combinations of other codes and narratives.

The following table summarises the key similarities and differences between these sources.

This report provides a statistical analysis of the fatality notifications received by NOHSC for work-related deaths occurring between 1 July 2004 and 31 December 2004. It provides an analysis of the industry, occupation and age of people killed. Also included in this report is a list of all incident narratives grouped by industry of employer which fall within the reporting period.

## NOTIFIED FATALITIES

### Industry

Table 3 shows the number of notified fatalities according to the industry of the workplace and the industry of the employer in which fatalities occurred. Industry of workplace relates to the main activity of the establishment at which the incident leading to the fatality occurred. The industry of employer relates to the main activity of the business employing the worker at the time of reporting the occupational injury leading to death.

The highest number of notified fatalities (24 fatalities) occurred at a workplace primarily engaged in Agriculture, forestry and fishing followed by Transport and storage (14 fatalities), Construction (11 fatalities), Government administration and defence (8 fatalities) and Mining (7 fatalities). Three of the nine by-stander fatalities were recorded in the Communication services and died as a result of a vehicle accident.

**Figure 1: Number of notified fatalities for workers by occupation, July 2004 to December 2004**

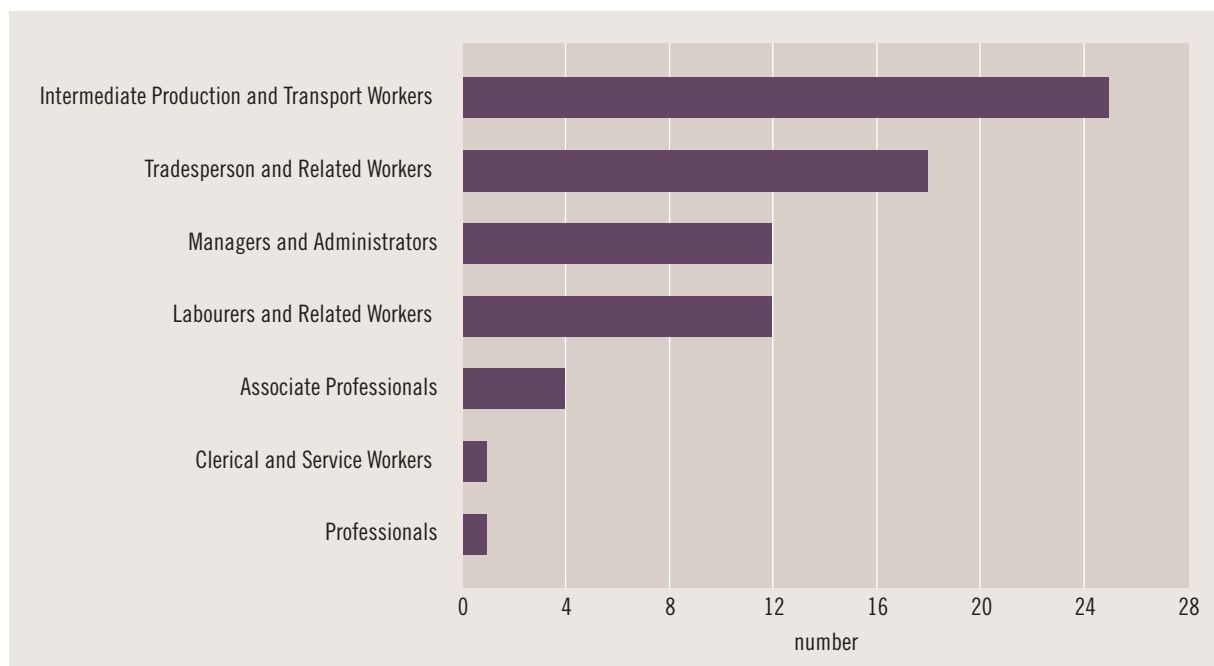


Figure 2: Number of notified fatalities by age group, July 2004 to December 2004

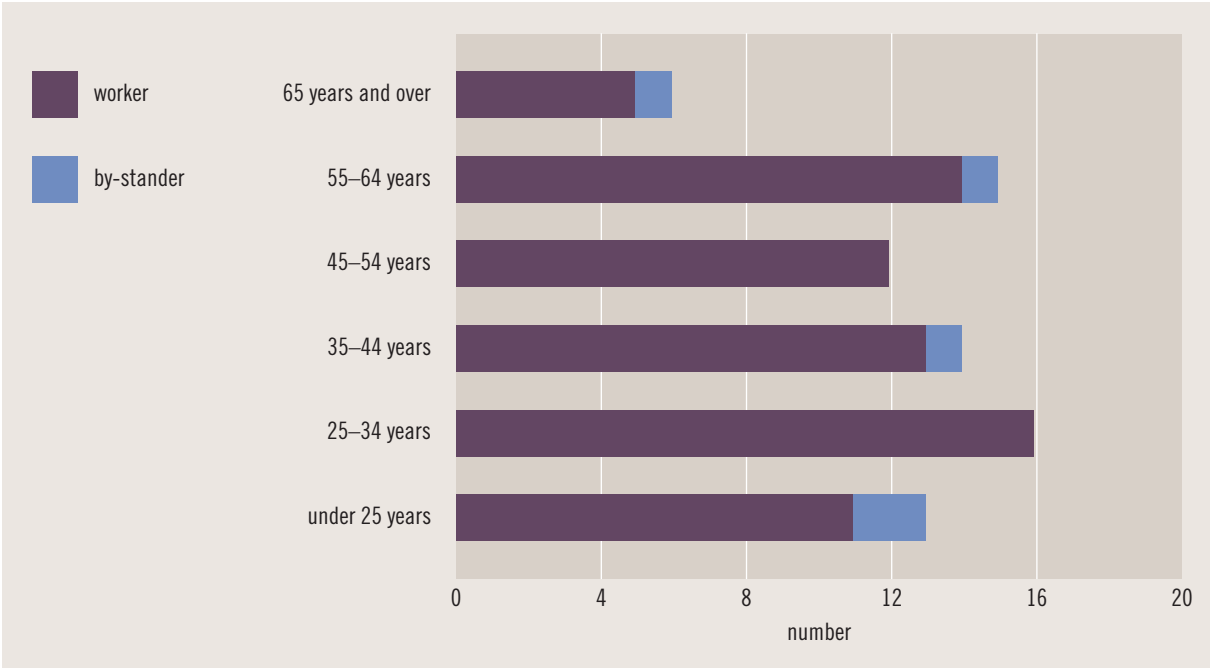
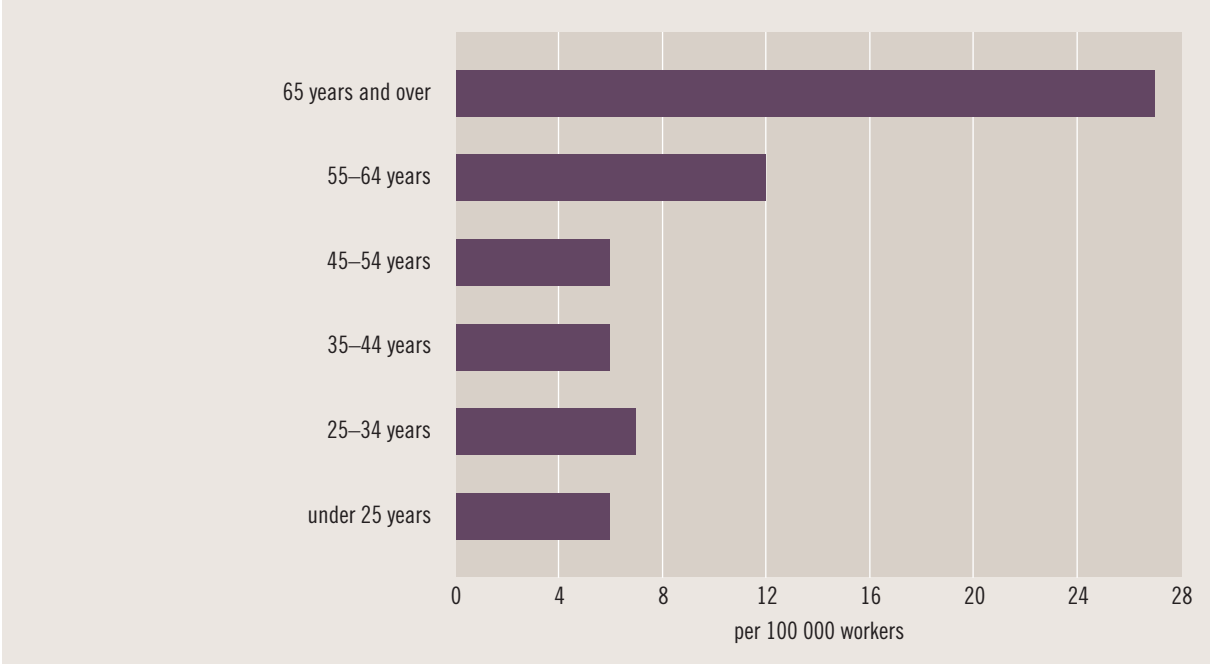
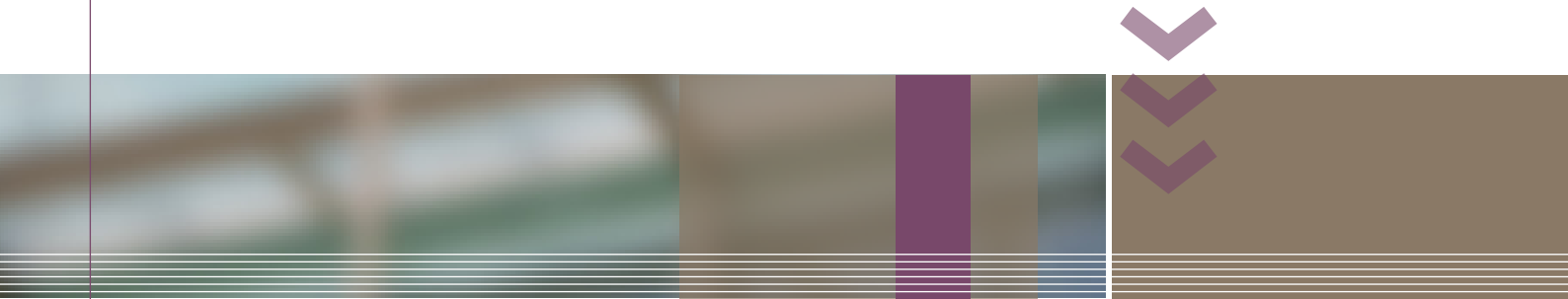


Figure 3: Incidence rate of notified worker fatalities by age group, July 2004 to December 2004





The Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry was also the most common industry of employer with 24 fatalities, followed by Transport and storage and Construction (12 fatalities each).

## OCCUPATION

Figure 1 shows the number of notified fatalities according to the occupation in which the fatality occurred. For the 73 cases in which occupation was known, the occupational group with the highest number of fatalities was Intermediate production and transport workers with 25. This group of workers includes mobile and stationary plant operators, machine operators and road and rail transport drivers. This was followed by Tradespersons and related workers (18 fatalities). There were 12 notified fatalities among Managers and administrators, 11 of which were managers of rural properties. Five of the fatalities among managers and administrators were aged 55 years and over.

### Age group

Figure 2 shows the number of notified fatalities according to the age group in which the fatality occurred, for 76 cases where age was supplied. For this group, the highest number of fatalities occurred in the 25–34 years age group (16 fatalities), followed by 55–64 years age group (15 fatalities). Out of the five by-stander notified fatalities with known age, two occurred among persons under 25 years old.

The number of notified fatalities in an age group can be expressed as a rate against the number of workers in that age group. This incidence rate can be used to compare the relative likelihood of workplace related fatality at different ages. The incidence rates in Figure 3 clearly show that workplace fatalities were more likely to occur

among older workers. The fatality incidence rate for workers aged 65 years and over was 2.7 per 100 000 workers—four and a half times greater than the rate of 0.6 experienced by workers aged less than 25 years.

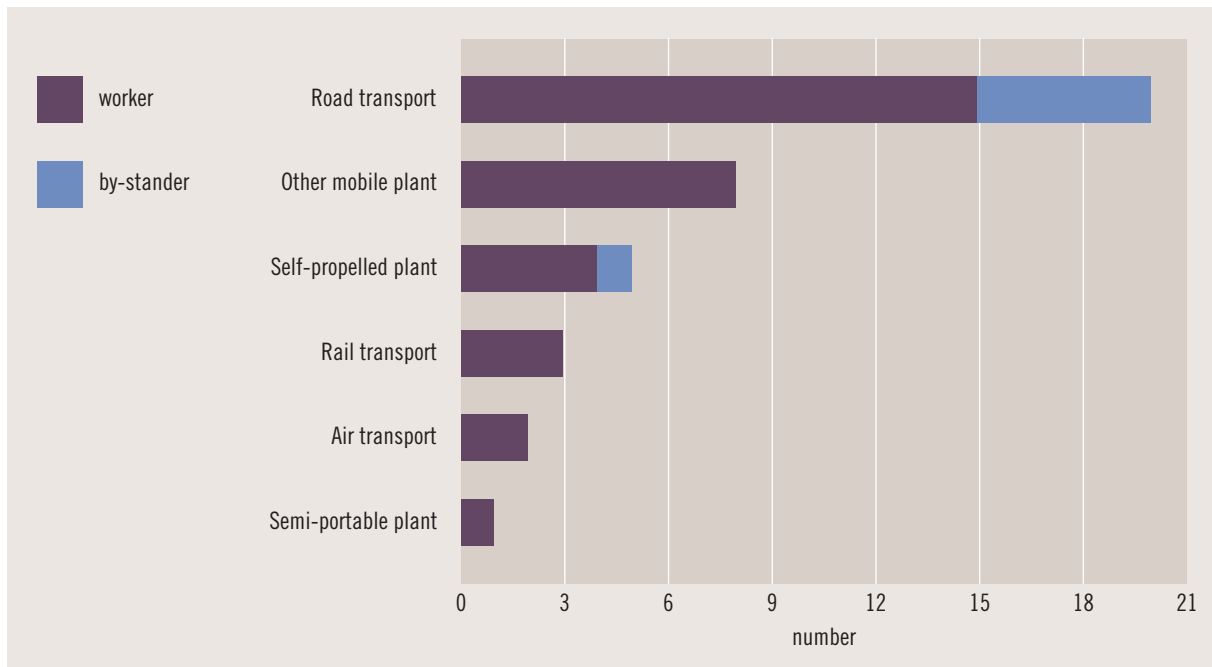
### Causes of fatalities

Table 4 lists the action or event that resulted in the fatality together with the object, piece of equipment or circumstance involved in the point at which things went wrong. There were 24 fatalities which were caused by vehicle accidents. Being hit by moving objects was the cause of a further 14 fatalities. In both cases, the majority of fatalities involved pieces of mobile plant and transport.

Contact with electricity was the cause of 10 notified fatalities, nine of which involved machinery and mainly fixed plant which includes electrical installations (6 fatalities).

Figure 4 shows the distribution of fatalities involving mobile plant and transport across the types of equipment within this group. There were 39 notified fatalities caused by mobile plant and transport. Of these fatalities, slightly more than half involved road transport which includes motorcycles, trucks, semi-trailers, lorries and cars (20 fatalities). Other mobile plant (includes tractors, ploughs and drilling rigs) was responsible for a further eight fatalities and self propelled plant (includes front-end loaders and mobile garbage compactors) was responsible for five fatalities.

**Figure 4: Notified fatalities by Mobile plant and transport breakdown agency, July 2004 to December 2004**



**Table 4: Number of notified fatalities by cause and breakdown agency of injury/disease, July 2004 to December 2004**

| Causes of fatality           | Breakdown agency of injury/disease |                           |                        |                       |                          |                | All agencies |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|
|                              | Mobile plant and transport         | Machinery and fixed plant | Environmental agencies | Non-powered equipment | Materials and substances | Other agencies |              |
| Vehicle accident             | 21                                 | 0                         | 1                      | 0                     | 0                        | 2              | 24           |
| Being hit by moving objects  | 9                                  | 1                         | 1                      | 2                     | 1                        | 0              | 14           |
| Being hit by falling objects | 1                                  | 0                         | 6                      | 2                     | 4                        | 0              | 13           |
| Trapped between machinery    | 8                                  | 0                         | 1                      | 2                     | 0                        | 1              | 12           |
| Contact with electricity     | 0                                  | 9                         | 0                      | 0                     | 0                        | 1              | 10           |
| Falls from a height          | 0                                  | 2                         | 0                      | 4                     | 1                        | 1              | 8            |
| Other causes of fatality     | 0                                  | 1                         | 2                      | 1                     | 0                        | 1              | 5            |
| <b>All causes</b>            | <b>39</b>                          | <b>13</b>                 | <b>11</b>              | <b>11</b>             | <b>6</b>                 | <b>6</b>       | <b>86</b>    |

## **INQUIRES**

For further information regarding the contents of this publication contact:

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