



Australian Government

**National Occupational
Health and Safety Commission**

NOTIFIED FATALITIES

**Statistical report
July 2003 to June 2004**

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 2003 to 30 June 2004.

From 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004:

- There were 144 notified work-related fatalities consisting of 126 workers and 18 bystanders (see Table 1).
- The majority of the fatalities were male (133) with 10 female fatalities. Gender was not identified for one bystander fatality. Half of the female fatalities were bystanders (5).
- More than one third (34%) of all worker fatalities were aged 55 or over, although workers in this age group comprise only about 12% of the Australian labour force. One in every 12 fatalities (8%) were from workers under the age of 20 while workers in this age group make 7% of the Australian labour force. More than one fourth of the bystander fatalities (5) were also under the age of 20.
- Almost half (49%) of the fatality notifications received were for workers employed in either the Agriculture, forestry and fishing or Construction industry. Slightly less than one third (31%) of all notified fatalities occurred at a workplace primarily engaged in Agriculture, forestry and fishing with a further 19% in Construction and 9% in Transport and storage.
- Vehicles were involved in 37 fatalities (26%), of which 19 were due to *Vehicle accidents*, 12 were pedestrians hit by a vehicle and six were due to people being hit or crushed by their unattended vehicles. Bystanders constituted six cases of all fatalities due to vehicle accidents (see Table 1). Many work-related transport fatalities are not notified to OHS jurisdictions and are therefore not reflected in these figures.

Table 1. Notified fatalities – Australia July 2003 to June 2004.

Place of fatality	Worker	Bystander	Total
At workplace (non-road)	113	12	125
Vehicle accident (road)	13	6	19
Total	126	18	144

- Crushing injuries and those due to *Falls from a height* accounted for 19% (28 cases) and 15% (22 cases) of all fatalities respectively.

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 bystanders 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 on 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 cover work-related deaths due to traffic accidents in their notification systems although they are covered in their workers' compensation systems. These fatalities are instead collected by the police;
- plane crash fatalities are not notified to all jurisdictions. These fatalities are notified to the relevant transport authority; and
- fatalities due to train or bus crashes may not be reported in all jurisdictions unless there is a close nexus with the person's work.

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 Coronial Information System (NCIS).

This report provides a statistical analysis of the fatality notifications received by NOHSC for work-related deaths occurring between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004. It provides an analysis of the industry, occupation and age of people killed. A small selection of incident narratives has been included to highlight recurring events that have resulted in fatalities and as a reminder of the human reality of the data.

At present, most jurisdictions do not collect reports of work-related deaths due to traffic or other transport related accidents through their notification systems. Instead, these fatalities are often notified to the police or the relevant transport authority. Alternative sources such as the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), the Road Safety Authorities of states and territories are being examined for the collection of information on work-related transport fatalities. It is expected that future versions of this report will include such information.

Notified fatalities

Industry

Table 2 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.

Slightly less than one third of notified fatalities (45 fatalities, 32%) occurred at a workplace primarily engaged in Agriculture, forestry and fishing. This was followed by Construction (27, 19%), Transport and storage (13, 9%) and Mining (11, 8%). In contrast, these industries account for only about 4%, 8%, 5% and 1% of the Australian labour force respectively¹. The industry of the workplace with the greatest number of bystander fatalities was Transport and storage (4 fatalities, 3%).

The highest number of fatalities occurred for workers employed in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (42 fatalities, 33%), followed by Construction, (29, 23%) then Transport and storage (10, 8%).

Table 2. Number of notified fatalities by industry, July 2003 to June 2004.

Industry	Industry of workplace			Industry of employer ^a
	Worker	Bystander	Total	Worker
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	43	2	45	42
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	1	1	2	0
Communication services	2	0	2	4
Construction	26	1	27	29
Cultural and recreational services	0	3	3	0
Education	2	1	3	1
Electricity, gas and water supply	3	0	3	2
Government administration and defence ^b	2	0	2	4
Health and community services	1	0	1	1
Manufacturing	6	2	8	6
Mining	11	0	11	9
Retail trade	4	1	5	3
Wholesale trade	1	0	1	3
Transport and storage	9	4	13	10
Personal and other services	8	1	9	8
Property and business services	0	0	0	4
Private residence ^c	4	2	6	0
Not available/no employer	3	0	3	18

^a Industry of employer is not applicable to bystanders

^b Fatalities in this Industry division do not include military personnel

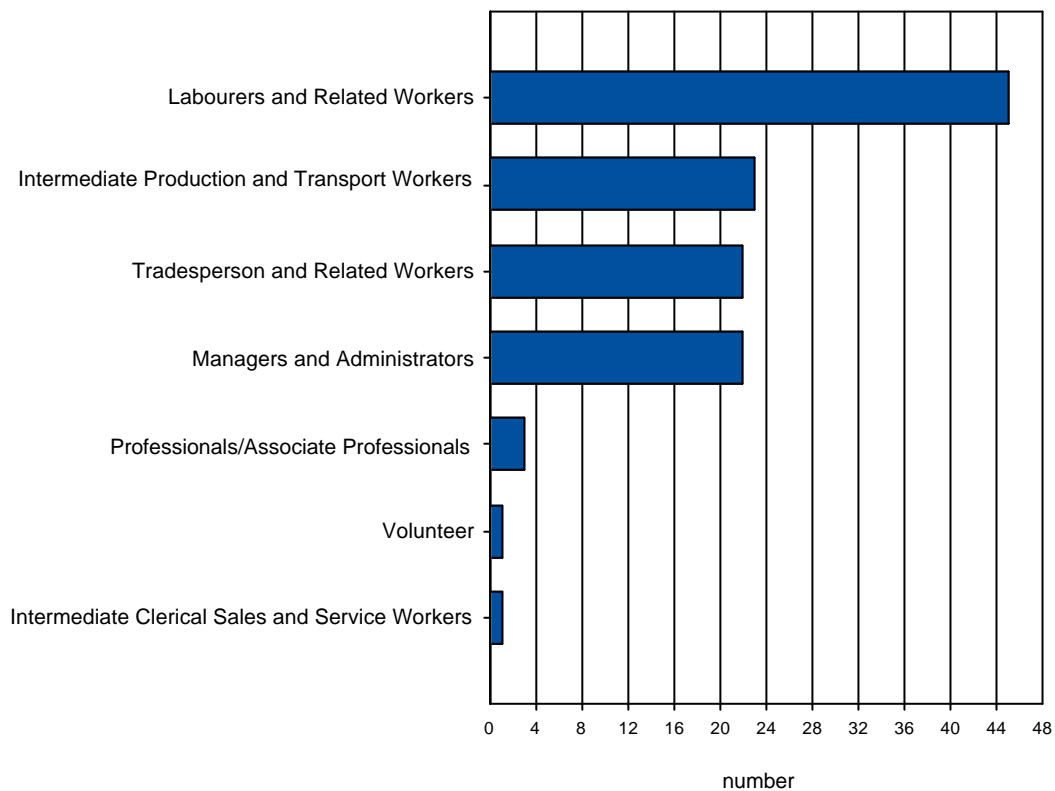
^c 'Private residence' only applies to Industry of workplace

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Labour Market Statistics, Cat no 6105.0, February 2004

Occupation

Figure 1 shows the proportion of notified fatalities according to the occupation in which the fatality occurred. These occupations represent 118 (82%) of the total number of cases. The occupational group with the highest number of fatalities was Labourers and related workers with 45, making 38% of the total notified fatalities although it represents only 9% of the workforce. This is followed by Intermediate production and transport workers (23 fatalities, 20%). There were 22 notified fatalities among Tradespersons and related workers, eight of which occurred at construction sites, with another four at mining sites. All 21 fatalities occurring among Managers and administrators were at rural properties (for example farms and cattle stations) and 14 of these were aged 55 years and over.

Figure 1. Proportion of notified fatalities to workers by occupation, July 2003 to June 2004

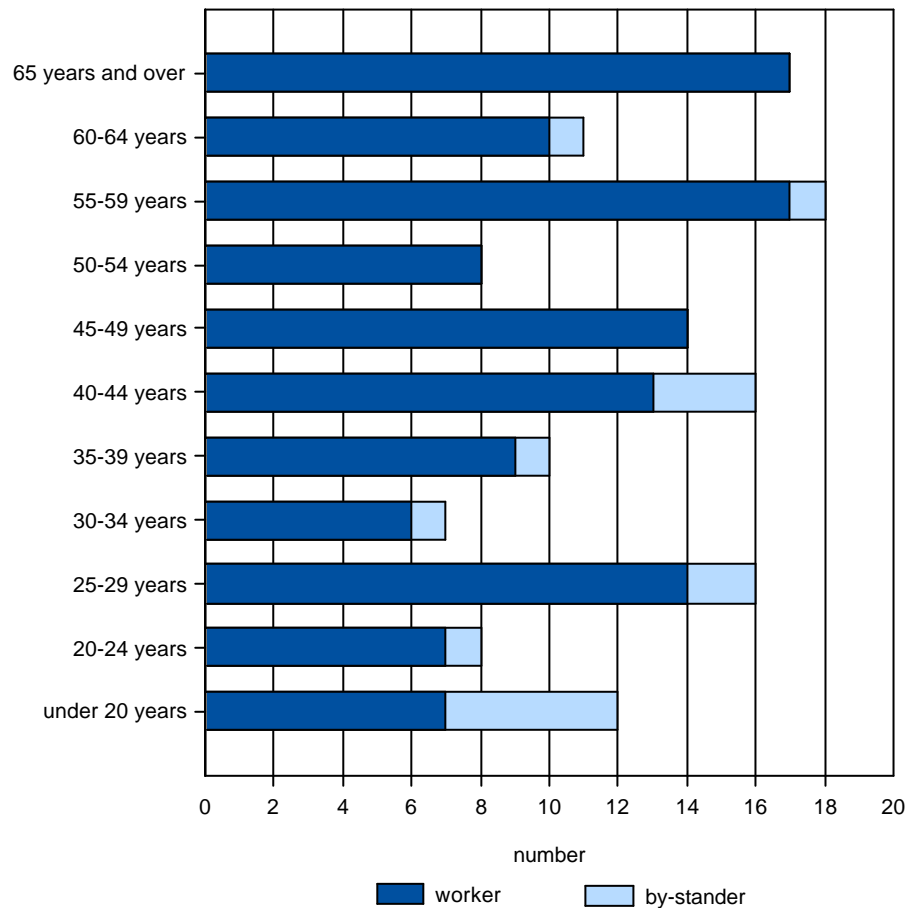


Age group

Figure 2 shows the proportion of notified fatalities according to the age group in which the fatality occurred. The highest number of fatalities occurred in the 55-59 years age group (18 fatalities) followed by 65 years and over (17 fatalities), 12 of which occurred in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry division. This was followed by the age groups of 25-29 years and 40-44 years with 16 notified fatalities each. There were 12 notified fatalities for persons aged under 20 years. Workers aged 55 years and over accounted for more than one third (46 fatalities) of all worker fatalities. In contrast, this age group constitutes only 13% of the Australian workforce².

The age group with the highest number of bystander fatalities was the *under 20* years group (5 fatalities), followed by the 40-44 years age group (3) then the 25-29 years age group (2).

Figure 2. Proportion of notified fatalities by age group, July 2003 to June 2004



² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian labour Market Statistics, Cat no 6105.0, February 2004

Causes of fatalities

- There were 29 fatalities due to *Being hit by moving objects*, 12 of which were pedestrians hit by moving vehicles and a further six were persons hit by their unattended vehicle.
- There were 19 fatalities resulting from *Vehicle accidents*. Other common causes of the fatalities were *Falls from a height* (22) and *Electrocution* (12).
- There were 24 fatalities as a result of *Being trapped between stationary and moving objects* or *Being trapped by moving machinery*.
- There were 58 notified fatalities caused by *Mobile plant and transport*. Of these, *Trucks, semi trailers and lorries* were responsible for 14 fatalities, and *Tractors* were responsible for another 15 fatalities, while *Cars, station wagons, vans, utilities* were responsible for seven fatalities.
- *Machinery and mainly fixed plant* was responsible for 24 fatalities, including nine involving *Conveyors and lifting plant* and six caused by *Electrical installations and power lines*.
- There were 21 notified fatalities involved the *Outdoor environment* including people falling from buildings and other structures, or drowning.

Figure 3. Notified fatalities by mechanism of injury or disease, July 2003 to June 2004

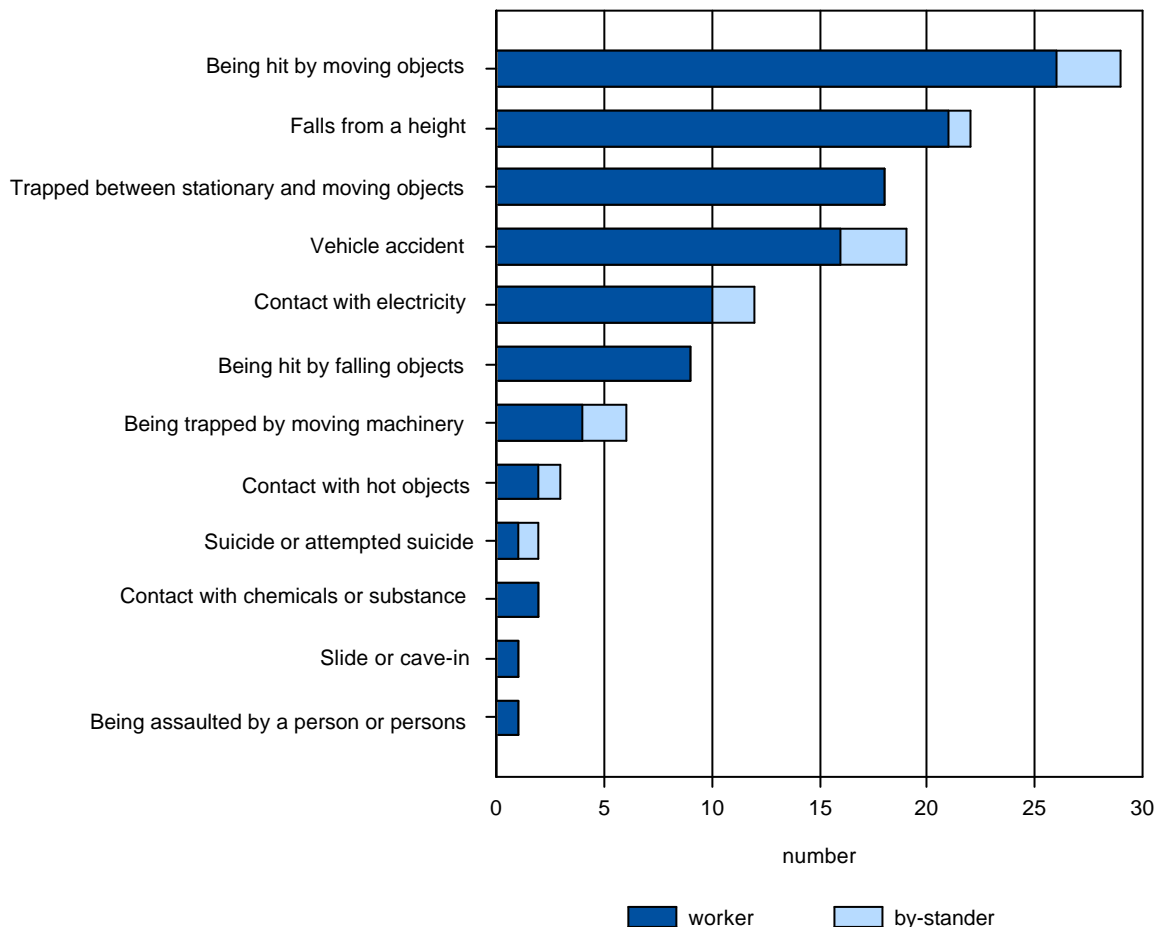
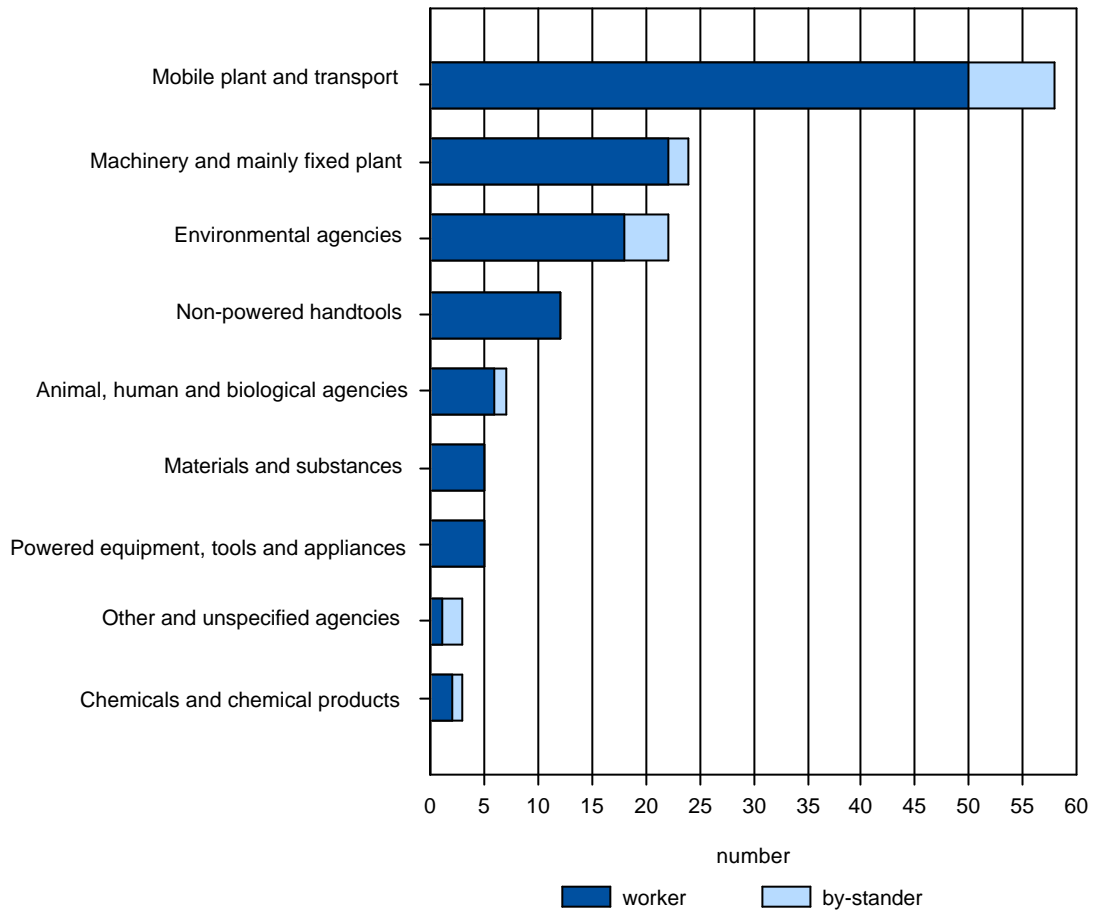


Figure 4. Notified fatalities by breakdown agency of injury or disease, July 2003 to June 2004



Selected samples from notified fatality reports

- A male worker received fatal crush injuries when the ride on mower he was attempting to load onto a trailer rolled back on to him.
- A 5 year old boy was run over when he fell off a trailer being towed by a ride on mower.
- A roadwork labourer received fatal injuries when struck by a vehicle while adjusting roadwork speed limit signs.
- A farm hand was fatally injured when the fertiliser spreader he was cleaning apparently rolled onto him.
- An electrician was repairing a faulty valve in an air-conditioning duct when he made a circuit between the electric motor and the metal frame of the roof resulting in fatal electric shock.
- The deceased was supervising the operation of a wood chipper when he was struck by a chipper disc that fractured and broke free of the chipper, following a major failure of the machinery and crashed through the loader.
- A farm owner was crushed to death between a farm utility he was driving and a farm gate when he alighted to shut the gate while leaving the vehicle running and in neutral gear.
- A sub-contractor at a construction site was performing roof installation works when he fell 14.5 meters to the ground, sustaining fatal injuries.
- A male worker sustained fatal head injuries when an end cap weighing approximately 40 kg attached to the end of a 12 inch water pipe blew off during pressure testing at a worksite.
- A carpenter sustained a fatal laceration to the throat when he was struck by an angle grinder that kicked back while he was using it to remove window frames.

Inquires

For further information regarding the contents of this publication contact:

The National Data Team
National Occupational Health and Safety Commission
(02) 6279 1012

This publication will be available at NOHSC's website <http://www.nohsc.gov.au>