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02/10/2001

Factsheet 19 - Work-related Accidents in the EU - the Statistical Picture (1998-1999)



The European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2001 is targeting the human and financial costs of work-related accidents. Under the slogan 'Success is no accident', the campaign is stressing the economic as well as the human need to cut occupational accident rates in a bid to encourage more organisations to sharpen their safety and health practices. This factsheet presents recently released statistics from Eurostat that reveal that work-related accidents remain at stubbornly high levels. During 1998, there were 4.7 million occupational accidents

leading to more than three days' absence from work. This represents a fall in the incidence rate of 0.4% to 4 089 accidents per 100 000 people. Initial estimates for 1999 suggested the rate was on the rise again and would approach the level of 1996 (4 229). However, this would still represent a substantial improvement on the 1994 rate (4 539). The total number of accidents, including those which did not involve absence from work, amounted to 7.4 million, equivalent to 6 380 per 100 000. The incidence of accident-related deaths at work fell by 3% to 5.0 per 100 000 people. Overall, 5 476 people were killed at work. A further 3 100 fatal accidents occurred between home and work. Of this total of nearly 8 600 work-related deaths, 59% were due to road or transport accidents.

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Accidents and incidents

Karla Van den Broek and Rik Op De Beeck, Prevent, Belgium

A major concern of safety at work is preventing accidents at work. An accident at work can be defined in different ways depending of the context in which it is used. Often also the word incident is used, sometimes as a broader term encompassing 'an accident' as a specific type of incident, but sometimes the words accidents and incidents refer to two different types of events.

Prevention of accidents at work focuses on the causes of accidents. Accident causation models provide a theoretical basis for explaining how accidents at work occur. Statistical data give some details about the accidents that occur in

the workplace: the occurrence, the victims and the causes.

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