

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Workplace fatalities in Saskatchewan increase in 2018

REGINA, SK – The Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board released data today documenting a rise in the number of workplace fatalities in the province during the first eight months of 2018. From Jan. 1 to Aug. 31 of 2018, there were 37 workplace fatalities.

"Workplace fatalities are higher than we have seen in the past few years," said Phil Germain, Vice President of Prevention at the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board. "As employers, workers and professional organizations, together we must take steps to reverse the trend. The solutions will come from everyone working together."

Over the past 15 years, WCB data show workplace fatalities averaged 37 per year in Saskatchewan. In 2017, the province saw 27 fatalities – the lowest number of fatalities in that timeframe.

"All workplace fatalities are preventable," Germain said. "We all need to step up to make our workplaces safer. All organizations, no matter their size, should be investing in their own safety programs and make safety a key part of their cultures. Safety belongs to each of us individually as much as it is a collective concern. Working safely is just smart business and it's the right thing to do."

The WCB reports on workplace trends, and its research indicates that organizations that comply with safety at every level, can reduce their risk of injuries and eliminate fatalities.

To date this year, the leading causes of workplace fatalities in Saskatchewan are occupational disease (exposure) and motor vehicle related incidents (MVI)/Aircraft. This compares to 2017 where the leading causes were occupational diseases and acute injuries. In the past 10 years, the top two leading causes have been occupational diseases (exposure) and acute injuries.

Occupational disease-related fatalities are often diagnosed years after a workplace exposure and account for 38.7 per cent of this year's fatalities. It is expected that occupational disease related deaths will continue as workers in the province continue to be exposed to asbestos, putting them at risk of disease or death decades into the future.

"There are a number of safety leaders and organizations, including WorkSafe Saskatchewan, Safe Saskatchewan, the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, looking into the workplace fatalities trend in Saskatchewan. While much is still unknown, it is certain there is no single cause, which is why so many groups and organizations are looking to find solutions that will reverse the trend," Germain said.

The WCB is changing some of its approaches to help drive a better outcome. WorkSafe is continuing to educate employers and workers to eliminate workplace deaths. WorkSafe uses a targeted approach to help industries and employers improve workplace health and safety.

WorkSafe is introducing a number of awareness campaigns and resources, including psychological health and safety, violence in the workplace, asbestos exposure and residential construction worker safety. All of these initiatives share a common goal of helping all Saskatchewan employers achieve Mission: Zero.

"At the end of the day, this is going to take a deep commitment from all of us to change the current trend and create safer workplaces everywhere in our province," Germain said.

For employers and workers, a good place to start is with the industry safety association or by visiting the WorkSafe Saskatchewan website at www.worksafesask.ca for practical steps they can take to prevent workplace injuries and deaths.

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About the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

The WCB is the provincial agency that delivers workplace insurance to Saskatchewan employers and benefits to Saskatchewan workers when they are hurt at work. The WCB legislation, [The Workers' Compensation Act, 2013](http://www.wcbsask.com), describes the workplaces that we cover and the benefits we provide. www.wcbsask.com