

Work-related fatalities, accidents and diseases

New ILO global estimates of work-related fatalities, accidents and diseases were made in 2005 and 2006 using available statistics for the year 2003¹. Fatal occupational accidents for 2003 are estimated at about 358 000, a very slight increase from the 2001 number. However non-fatal occupational accidents seem to have increased to about 337 Million per year. Fatal work-related diseases on the other hand show a slight decrease to 1.95 Million per year.

Table 1. Estimated numbers of work-related fatal and non-fatal accidents and diseases (Annex 1)

Year	Accidents causing ≥ 4 days' absence from work	Work-related Fatal accidents	Work-related Fatal diseases	Total of fatal accidents and diseases
2001	268 million	351 000	2.03 million	2.38 million
2003	337 million	358 000	1.95 million	2.31 million

The rise in non-fatal accidents is partly explained by an increase of the economically active population globally and, in some regions, by the increase of total employment. The data sets used for calculations cover also more countries than in calculations for previous periods. Deaths caused by hazardous substances have almost doubled to about 651 000². The main reason for the increase is that the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease attributable fractions have been found to be much higher than previous estimates³. When these factors are taken into account, the overall numbers do not seem to have changed in any significant way. The new estimates may in fact be a more accurate portrayal of the true situation in 2001.

Estimates of occupational accidents and diseases are by necessity extrapolated from statistics that are often heterogeneous in terms of definitions, data collection methodologies and quality. As such, they provide more of an approximation of the burden of work-related accidents and diseases than an accurate assessment. Many countries still lack the expertise and the resources to collect statistics that would allow a sufficiently reliable evaluation of the magnitude of work-related accidents and diseases. There is a strong need in

¹ Update figures of global estimates of occupational accidents and work-related diseases Päivi Hämmäläinen, Tampere University of Technology, Institute of Occupational Safety Engineering, Finland.

² Driscoll T, Steenland NK, Nelson DI, Leigh J, Concha-Barrientos M, Fingerhut M, Prüss-Üstün A. 2005a. The global burden of disease due to occupational carcinogens. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 48:419-431.

³ Driscoll T, Steenland NK, Nelson DI, Leigh J, Concha-Barrientos M, Fingerhut M, Prüss-Üstün A. 2005a. The global burden of disease due to occupational carcinogens. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 48:419-431.