



Employee Safety

## Understanding Accidents: Why They Happen and What You Can Do

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With so much focus on health and safety at work, most people believe that workplace injuries and fatalities should now be a rare phenomenon. Especially since today, many businesses routinely issue and mandate the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). But, as the latest research clearly shows, it's a problem that refuses to go quietly.

- Over 4,600 workers are killed on the job each year<sup>17</sup>
- Every day in America 13 people go to work and never come home<sup>i</sup>
- Two US workers are killed every hour<sup>i</sup>

Surprisingly, many of these accidents occur on premises which have health and safety programs in place – even where the correct PPE has been issued. So why is it so difficult to ensure employee safety? While injuries can occur across a wide range of workplace activities, there are some areas that appear disproportionately dangerous.

# 8 Types of Safety Hazards

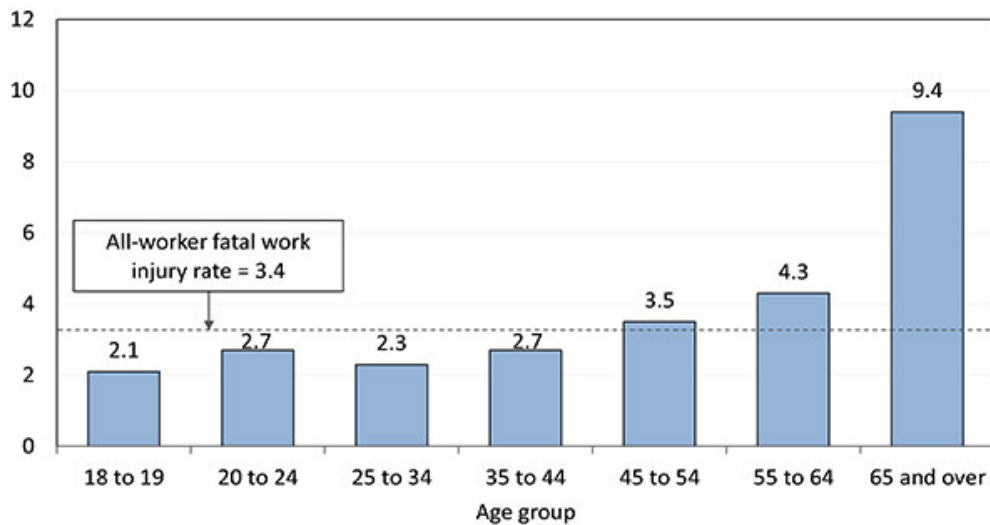


## 8 Types of Safety Hazards

**Maintenance** is a routine activity, but for individual workers it often presents a deviation from everyday activity. Maintenance workers are using different tools and equipment, different PPE and there is pressure to get equipment back up and running quickly. This can inadvertently breed conditions where accidents are significantly more likely than usual.

**Age** also plays a role in occupational safety. The baby boomer generation is staying in their jobs longer than previous generations<sup>[1]</sup>. The economic downturn can certainly be a contributing factor to this trend. As pensions have become a thing of the past, the employee benefit for retirement is the 401K, which is susceptible to market fluctuations. Workers age 65 and older had the highest fatal injury rate of all workers, 2.5X the rate of all-worker fatal work injury rate<sup>[1]</sup>. Their experiences, expertise and familiarity with equipment may leave them overconfident. Exhibiting this "It will never happen to me" attitude, they have an invisible mindset that can lead to incorrect procedures, methods and tools leaving vulnerable to injuries.

## Rate of fatal work injuries per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers by age group, 2015



The greatest number of fatal work injuries involved workers in the 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 age groups. Workers age 65 and over had the highest fatal injury rate of all workers (9.4 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers compared to the all-worker rate of 3.4).

Note: Fatal injury rates exclude workers under the age of 16 years, volunteers, and resident military. For additional information on the fatal work injury rate methodology, please see [www.bls.gov/iif/oshnotice10.htm](http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshnotice10.htm).  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2016.

**Personal Protection Equipment** is issued but not used. PPE is not a one-size-fits all solution. Employees want stylish and comfortable PPE solutions that adapt to their environment. Uncomfortable PPE is often modified or the use of it is discontinued all together, leaving employees at risk for injury. The hazard you are mitigating, employee comfort and work environment must all be evaluated before issuing PPE. PPE that allows workers to express their individuality can help drive compliance [1].

You will probably never be able to create a 100% safe environment, but by focusing on a combination of culture, process and equipment you should be able to minimize accidents and injuries throughout your organization which will be a positive impact to your business.

Kimberly-Clark Protection is here to help make your workplace exceptional – healthier, safer and more productive. A certified Kimberly-Clark Professional is available to conduct a Hazard Walk at your facility to create a tailored solution, designed specifically for you. Please contact your local MSC rep for more information.

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[1] United States Department of Labor, OSHA Data & Statistics, 2015 Statistics

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*[i]* Business Insider Magazine: Hard-Charging Baby Boomers May Never Leave Their Jobs, Lydia Dallett

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*[j]* Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of fatal occupational injuries, 2015 Statistics

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