

Construction Industry Records High Fatality Numbers Once Again: 10 Steps You Can Take to Address Workplace Dangers

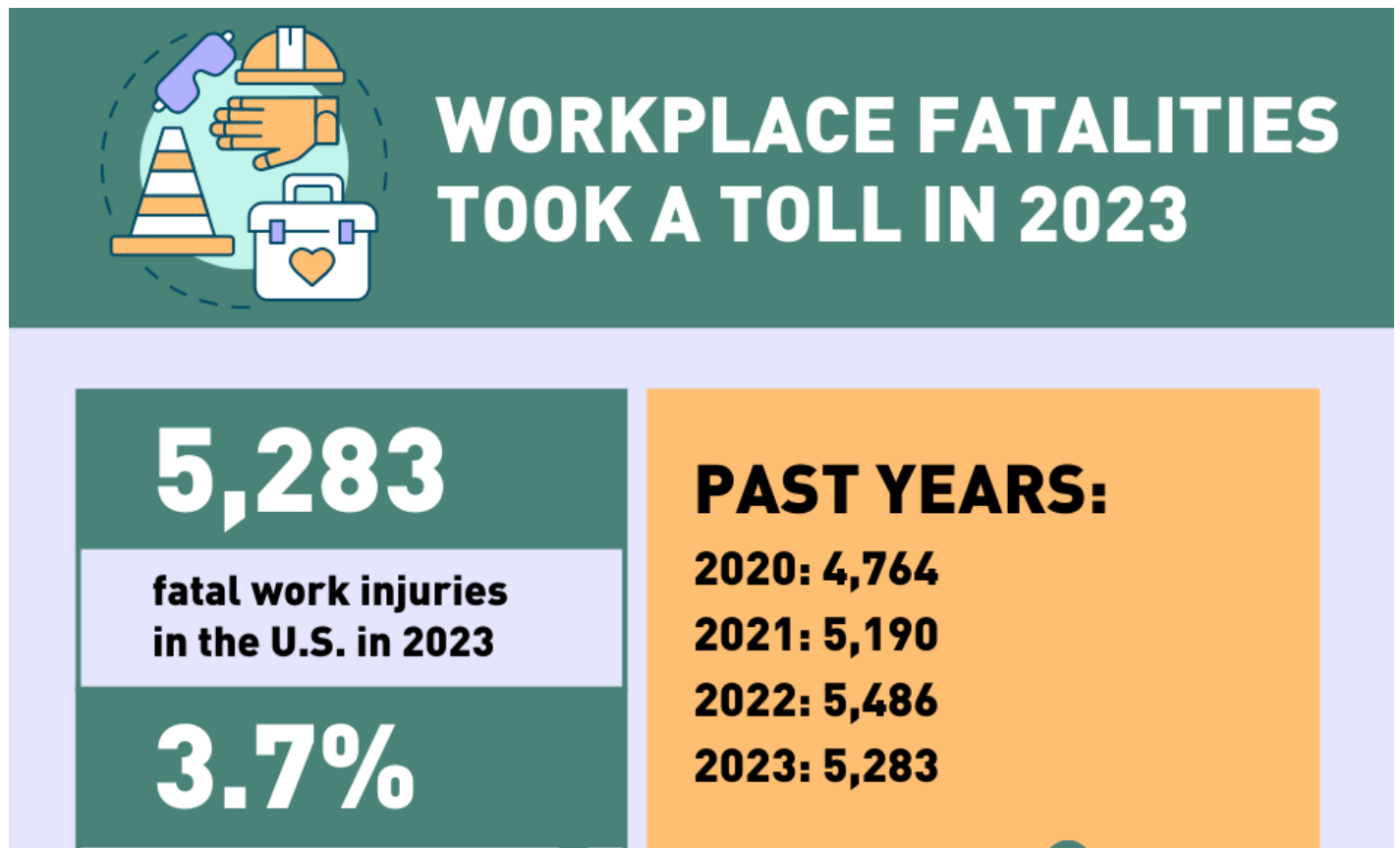
Insights

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Recently released statistics revealed that working in the construction industry was once again the most dangerous occupation in the country, as over 20% of all workplace fatalities from 2023 occurred in the construction field. Over 1,000 construction workers lost their lives in the United States during the most recent reporting year, according to the December 19 government release, demonstrating once again that safety needs to be of paramount concern in the industry. This Insight dives deeper into the numbers and provides construction employers with 10 steps you can take to address the dangers at your worksites.

Workplace Fatalities Recap

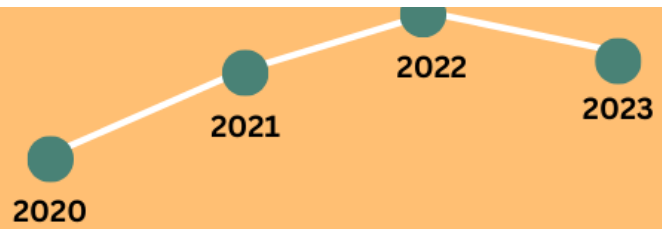
Before we dive into industry-specific figures, here is an infographic providing some basic data across all fields for 2023. If you want to explore further, the raw data from the government can be found [here](#).



decrease from 2022

**3.5 fatalities
per 100,000**

full-time workers



HOW DID FATALITIES OCCUR?

1,942

Transportation

885

Falls, slips, trips

820

Exposure to
harmful substances,
environments

779

Contact incidents

740

Violent acts

104

Explosions and fires

FATALITIES IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES:

1,075

Construction

391

Manufacturing

306

Retail trade

265

Leisure and hospitality

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Construction Industry Detail

Diving deeper into the construction industry, the following infographic illuminates why the industry is focused on improved safety.

FATALITIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, 2023

1,075
fatalities

industry with
highest tally
of fatalities

HOW DID FATALITIES OCCUR?

421

Falls, slips, trips

240

Transportation
incidents

200

Exposure to
harmful substances,
environments

148

Contact incidents

46

Violent acts

17

Explosions and fires

Incident numbers have

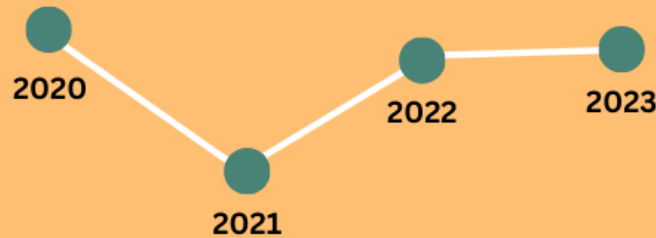
Incident numbers have held fairly steady in recent years

2020: 1,088

2021: 951

2022: 1,069

2023: 1,075



What Can Construction Employers Do to Prevent Workplace Fatalities?

Here are a set of 10 recommendations to help construction employers prevent fatalities at their worksites. You'll probably recognize the first four items on this list as they are called the "Fatal Four" or "Focus Four" by OSHA – since over 60% of all construction deaths stem from these categories – but all of the recommendations are helpful reminders.

1. Implement and Enforce Fall Protection Systems

Falls account for nearly 40% of construction deaths, so it is critical for you to consistently train your workers and inspect your worksites. Implement and rigorously enforce OSHA-compliant fall protection systems like harnesses, guardrails, and safety nets. Install and maintain perimeter protection.

2. Minimize Struck-By Incidents

Train workers to maintain safe distances from moving vehicles, use spotters, and install proper barriers. Provide high-visibility clothing to ensure workers are seen.

3. Limit Exposure to Excavation and Trench Hazards

Follow OSHA's trench safety standards: protective systems, safe access, and daily inspections by a competent person. Cave-ins are often fatal but entirely preventable.

4. Control Electrical Hazards

Electrocutions remain a significant risk. Regularly inspect wiring, use ground-fault circuit interrupters, and ensure only qualified electricians handle electrical tasks. Locate and identify

utilities before starting work. Ensure your workers don't use portable electric tools unless grounded or double-insulated.

5. Implement Lockout/Tagout Procedures

For tasks involving energy systems, ensure workers de-energize and lock out / tag out equipment before maintenance or servicing to prevent accidental activation.

6. Conduct Regular Safety Training

Provide training on hazard recognition, equipment use, and emergency procedures. Well-trained workers are less likely to make fatal errors on the job site.

7. Inspect Equipment Daily

Require daily inspections of tools, machinery, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Faulty equipment is a common cause of construction injuries and deaths. This is especially important now that OSHA's new rule requires you to provide properly fitting PPE.

8. Establish Strict Hazard Communication Protocols

Use clear signage, labels, and safety data sheets to ensure workers understand chemical and physical hazards. A well-informed team is better equipped to avoid accidents.

9. Develop and Practice Emergency Plans

Create detailed emergency response plans for incidents like fires, medical emergencies, and collapses. Conduct drills to ensure workers can respond quickly under stress.

10. Promote a Safety-First Culture

Engage leadership, labor partners, and workers in prioritizing safety over speed or shortcuts. Reinforce positive behavior, celebrate safety milestones, and address violations immediately.

Conclusion

We will monitor developments in this area and provide updates as warranted. Make sure you are subscribed to Fisher Phillips' Insight System to get the most up-to-date information. If you have any questions, contact the author of this Insight, your Fisher Phillips attorney, or any member of our Workplace Safety or Construction Industry groups.

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