

Current System of Determining On-the-Job Fatalities Has Serious Flaws

A series of flawed provisions in the current Occupational Safety and Health Act prevents the accurate calculation of work-related deaths. The system does represent a fairly accurate tally of on-the-job fatal injuries, but does not include work-related illnesses and occupational diseases like silicosis, asbestosis or hepatitis (sometimes seen in health care workers who have been inadvertently exposed) unless the Bureau of Labor Statistics – in its annual Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) and Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) – determines that the death was “precipitated by an injury event.”

Neither the CFOI nor the SOII used data gathered by its own employees, instead relying upon public records like:

- News stories
- Police reports
- [Workers' compensation claims](#)
- Death certificates
- On-the-job fatalities reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other state or federal agencies
- Motor vehicle accident records

Furthermore, the BLS only includes worker deaths that occur on U.S. soil (regardless of whether employees of American companies are working abroad at the time of their deaths) and those included in legitimate, legal activities at the time of the fatal injury. This gap in the accounting method potentially excludes thousands of deaths each year and

prevents a true representation of dangerous workplaces, thus misleading job seekers around the nation.

While calculations of fatal workplace injuries have improved in recent years, the BLS still has a long way to go before the true extent of on-the-job deaths can be revealed.