

Issues



U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Outdoor Occupations Exhibit High Rates of Fatal Injuries

Rough seas, rugged terrain, and inclement weather are some of the life-threatening hazards facing workers who perform their jobs outdoors. Natural conditions such as these help explain why fishers and timber cutters and loggers, for example, posted unusually high rates of fatal work injuries—rates 25-30 times higher than the national figure of about 5 deadly injuries per 100,000 workers.

Besides fishing and timber cutting, nine other outdoor occupations exceeded the national fatality rate by a wide

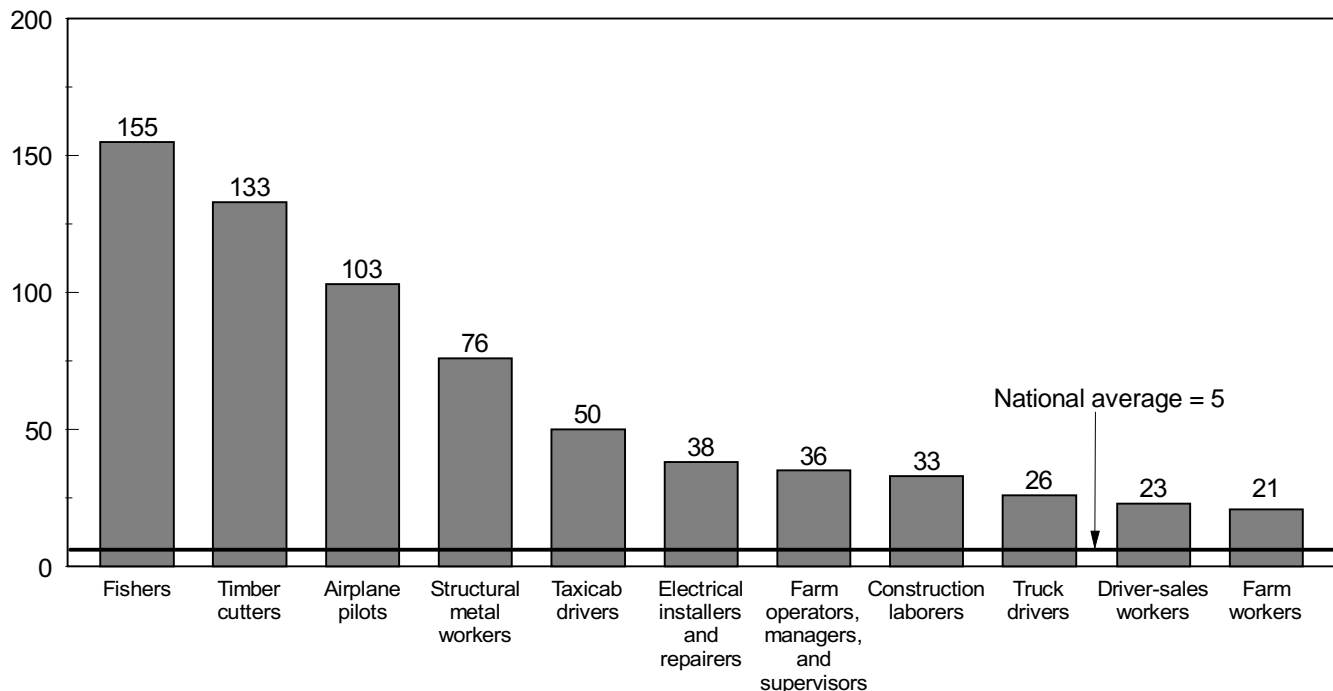
margin (see chart). That margin varied greatly among the nine, with truck drivers, driver-sales workers, farm workers and managers, construction laborers, and electrical power installers at 4 to 8 times the national fatality rate and cab drivers, structural metal erectors, and aircraft pilots at 10 to 20 times that rate. Only those occupations classified in the 1993 BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries as having at least 30 fatalities and a fatality rate of 20 per 100,000 workers or higher are included. Together, these 11 job

categories made up a third of the nearly 6,300 fatalities reported in the 1993 BLS Census.

Interestingly, no jobs performed on factory floors were as “deadly,” although manufacturing activities commonly result in some of the highest rates of nonfatal injuries and illnesses resulting in work-days lost. The fatality rate for all manufacturing, in fact, was slightly below the national rate. In contrast, workers in agriculture, construction, and transportation are routinely exposed to the rigors of the outdoors, and their elevated rates of

Rate of fatal injury per 100,000 workers in "high risk" occupations, 1993

Fatality rate



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1993

Occupations with high rates of fatal work injuries per 100,000 workers aged 16 years and older, 1993

Occupation	Fatalities per 100,000 employed	Number of fatalities	Major deadly event
Fishers	155	79	Boating mishap
Timber cutting and logging	133	124	Struck by tree
Airplane pilots and navigators	103	104	Air crash
Structural metal workers	76	34	Fall
Taxicab drivers and chauffeurs	50	113	Homicide
Electrical power installers and repairers	38	42	Electrocution
Farm operators, managers, and supervisors	36	430	Vehicular
Construction laborers	33	218	Fall, contact with objects
Truck drivers	26	731	Highway crash
Driver-sales workers	23	41	Highway crash
Farm workers	21	172	Vehicular

NOTE: "Fatality rate" is an experimental measure for workers 16 years and older. It is based on fatality counts by occupation for workers 16 years and older from the 1993 BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (the numerator) and occupational employment of civilians 16 years and older from the Current Population Survey, 1993 annual averages (the denominator). Also included in the denominator are resident Armed Forces counts by job from Department of Defense records.

both fatal and serious, nonfatal injuries appear to reflect this incremental risk.

These three industry sectors, in fact, employed the vast majority of workers in 10 of the occupations with high rates of fatal injury. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing employed most fishers, timber cutters and loggers, farm operators, and farm workers; construction industries

included most structural metal workers, electrical power installers, and construction laborers; and transportation industries engaged most pilots, cab drivers, and truck drivers. The remaining occupation, driver-sales worker, was found primarily in wholesale and retail trade.

The accompanying table provides

information on the principal ways in which workers in outdoor occupations were fatally injured. Transportation-related incidents were cited as the major deadly event for 6 of the 11 occupations. Other deadly events pointed up the potential dangers of harvesting trees, working at elevations and around power lines, and chauffeuring passengers when payment is made in cash.

For more information on the "who and how" of deadly injuries at work and a description of the methods and limits of measuring the risk of fatal work injuries, contact the Office of Safety, Health and Working Conditions, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20212-0001. Telephone (202) 606-6175.

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