



NEWS RELEASE

Release: Immediate
Date: Jan. 17, 2008

Contacts: Neal O'Briant, (919) 715-3233
Dolores Quesenberry, (919) 733-0348

Workplace Fatalities Post Record Decrease

RALEIGH—Fatalities from workplace accidents fell 30 percent in North Carolina last year—the largest decrease ever recorded—according to figures released Thursday by the N.C. Department of Labor.

The number of fatal work accidents fell from 65 in 2006 to 45 in 2007. The N.C. Department of Labor investigated 68 workplace fatalities in 2005 and 75 in 2004. Non-work-related fatalities involving medical conditions such as heart attacks and strokes are not included in these totals.

“I credit the employers and employees of our state for continuing to emphasize safety in the workplace,” Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry said. “We have noticed improvements during the past few years, but this (30) percent drop is remarkable.”

“And yet, I am saddened by every fatality,” Berry said. “Even one fatality affects many people—the family, co-workers, the community. I want all workers to return home safe and healthy to their families, loved ones and friends.”

In 2000, North Carolina had a workplace injury and illness rate of 5.7 cases for every 100 full-time workers in the private sector. The latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show by 2006 the state’s injury and illness rate had dropped to 4.0 in the private sector. The national rate was 4.4 for 2006.

“The business and industry leaders of our state realize that workplace safety training pays big dividends,” Berry said. “We get to see these results in this huge reduction in workplace fatalities, but they’re seeing it every day in increased productivity and reduced workers’ compensation costs. A safe work environment contributes to economic development.”

—MORE—

Of the 45 fatalities, 20 occurred in construction. Another 11 took place in manufacturing. Seven fatalities occurred in the retail trade and wholesale trade sectors, and three fatalities occurred in the services industry. The forestry industry had two fatalities, as did the transportation industry.

More than two-thirds of North Carolina's counties had no work-related fatalities. Wake County experienced the most fatalities with four, followed by Cumberland County with three. Eight counties had two fatalities. They were Chowan, Durham, Forsyth, Franklin, Gaston, Lee, Mecklenburg and Wilson. There were 22 counties that experienced one fatality.

Among racial groups, whites had 30 fatalities and blacks had eight. There were six Hispanic victims, a 57 percent decrease from the 14 in 2006. There was one Asian victim.

The leading cause of the work-related fatalities was being crushed by an object with 18 of the fatalities, followed by 12 fatalities involving being struck by an object. Six North Carolinians suffered fatal slips or falls. Two workers were electrocuted, and two died from carbon monoxide poisoning. Another five workers died in various other event categories.

###