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Oregon announces 2006 workplace deaths

Improvements in safety result in third-lowest number in state history

(Salem) – Thirty-seven people covered by Oregon's workers' compensation system died on the job during 2006, the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS) announced today.

The 2006 total marks the third-lowest number of compensable workplace deaths in the state's history. Thirty-one workers died on the job during 2005, the lowest number reported since the state began tracking workplace deaths in 1943. There was an average of 55 workplace deaths per year in Oregon in the 1990s and 81 deaths per year during the 1980s.

“Oregon employers and employees have worked together to improve workplace safety, which has resulted in a significant drop in workplace deaths over the years,” said Cory Streisinger, DCBS director. “But 37 deaths is 37 too many. There still is much work to do to ensure that all Oregonians come home from work safely each day.”

The largest concentration of deaths occurred in logging (seven deaths) and truck transportation (six deaths). Thirty-two percent of the deaths resulted from motor vehicle accidents.

“Motor vehicle accidents have been the leading cause of workplace deaths in Oregon in four of the past five years,” said Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA. “At Oregon OSHA, we are increasing our efforts to help employers develop effective driver safety programs, which can prevent many of these accidents.”

Oregon OSHA currently offers educational workshops, consultation services, training videos and Web site information to help Oregon employers create or improve their motor vehicle safety program.

DCBS compiles fatality statistics from records of death claim benefits paid by Oregon workers' compensation insurers during the calendar year. The data reported may exclude workplace fatalities involving self-employed individuals, city of Portland police and fire employees, federal employees, and incidents occurring in Oregon to individuals with out-of-state employers. These workers are either not subject to Oregon workers' compensation coverage requirements or are covered by other compensation systems.

Deaths that occur during a prior calendar year may appear in the compensable fatality count for a later year because of the time required to process a claim. Complete data on all deaths caused by injuries in Oregon workplaces, regardless of whether they are covered by workers' compensation insurance, are computed separately and reported in the annual Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) administered by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The 2006 CFOI report is not expected for release by the Bureau of Labor Statistics until the fall 2007.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon's largest regulatory agency, administers state laws and rules, and protects consumers and workers in the areas of workers' compensation, occupational safety and health, financial services, insurance, building codes, and targeted contracting opportunities for small business. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.

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