

Violence in the Workplace Oregon, 1991-1995



**Research & Analysis Section
Oregon Department of Consumer
& Business Services**



December 1996

Violence in the Workplace

A Study of Workers' Compensation Claims Caused by Violent Acts, 1991 to 1995

Department of Consumer and Business Services

Director, Kerry Barnett

Information Management Division

Division Administrator, Dan Adelman

Research and Analysis Section

Section Manager, Ed Bissell
Assistant Manager, Kathy Thomas
Research Analyst, Gary Helmer

Publication Date: December 1996

Incompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), this publication is available in alternate formats by calling (503) 378-8254 (V/TDD).

The information in this report is in the public domain and may be reprinted without permission.

Visit the DCBS web site at: <http://www.cbs.state.or.us>



Information Management Division
350 Winter St NE, Room 300
Salem, OR 97310
(503) 378-8254

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Highlights	1
Fatalities	2
Trends in violent claims	2
Types of incidents	2
Industry and occupation	3
Gender and age	5
County of injury	5
Costs of workplace violence	6
Conclusions	6
Additional information	6
Appendix A. Methodology	7

Text Tables

Table 1. Occupational fatalities caused by violent acts, Oregon, 1988-1995	2
Table 2. Accepted disabling claims caused by violent acts, Oregon, 1988-1995	2
Table 3. Types of violent acts, Oregon, 1995	3
Table 4. Violent claims by industrial sector, Oregon, 1991-1995	3
Table 5. Occupations most frequently involved in violent claims, Oregon, 1991-1995	4
Table 6. Violent claims by claimant gender and age, Oregon, 1991-1995	5
Table 7. Violent claims by county of injury, Oregon, 1991-1995	5
Table 8. Claim costs for violent claims, Oregon, 1991-1995	6

INTRODUCTION

Workplace violence has become a concern across the nation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that in 1994 there were more than 1000 homicides in the workplace and over 20,000 violent incidents that resulted in lost workdays. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has estimated that about one million employees are assaulted in the workplace each year. In Oregon, hundreds of workers are injured by co-workers, patients, clients or strangers each year. This report discusses the accepted disabling workers' compensation claims during the years 1991-1995 that resulted from violent acts.

In Oregon, a disabling claim involves more than three days of time loss, permanent disability, inpatient hospitalization or death. An accepted claim means that a workers' compensation insurer has determined that the condition is work related and compensable. The claims that are not severe enough to be defined as disabling are not reported to the Department. Therefore, this report includes only the more severe cases.

One difficulty with a study of workplace violence is the problem of defining adequately the term "occupational violence." When a retail store clerk is shot and money is removed from the cash register, we know the incident was intentionally violent and related to the clerk's occupation. However, when a nursing aide at a hospital is struck or pushed by a patient, the intent to cause harm is more difficult to identify. The patient may have been trying to hurt the victim, or the patient may have been simply trying to maintain balance and happened to connect with the aide's body. These cases are not the same, and they should be studied separately. However, because of the difficulty in discerning the intent of an assailant and because of the similarity in outcomes, some aggregation of cases involving violent acts is necessary. We have split the cases in this study into two groups. For brevity, all cases are termed "violent claims." The term used to describe intentionally violent acts is "harmful"; the term to describe violent acts in which the intent is not clear is "unknown." Appendix A contains more details on how the claims were selected and categorized.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Between 1988 and 1995, 27 Oregon workers were murdered in compensable incidents.
- The number of compensable claims resulting from violent incidents fell more than 40 percent between 1988 and 1991. Much of the decrease resulted from fewer claims from the state hospital system. The number of violent claims has remained nearly constant since 1992.
- Eighty percent of violent claims from the private sector came from the services and retail trade sectors. In the health and social services industries, most of the claims involved another person striking the injured worker, and the intent to cause harm was unknown. In contrast, many of the claims in the retail sector, specifically food stores and eating and drinking establishments, resulted from crimes.
- Nearly 80 percent of the violent claims from state government came from the state hospital system.
- Nursing aides had a quarter of the violent claims. Most of the incidents occurred when these workers were struck by another person. Police and guards had 14 percent of the claims. Two-thirds of these claims involved known harmful intent.
- Fifty-seven percent of the violent claims were filed by women. During 1991-95, 2.2 percent of all claims from women resulted from violent incidents. In comparison, 0.8 percent of the claims from men resulted from violence.
- For violent claims closed during 1991-95, the average claim cost \$8,795 and resulted in 69 time loss days.

FATALITIES

In Oregon, the number of occupational fatalities has been declining. In 1995, there were 48 compensable deaths. Three of these deaths were homicides (see Table 1). The number of homicides has not declined, so homicides are an increasing proportion of the occupational fatalities.

Table 1. Occupational fatalities caused by violent acts, Oregon, 1988-1995

Year of acceptance	Fatal claims	Claims due to homicide	Homicides as a % of fatalities
1988	81	2	2.5%
1989	75	2	2.7%
1990	64	2	3.1%
1991	65	3	4.6%
1992	63	8	12.7%
1993	64	1	1.6%
1994	55	6	10.9%
1995	48	3	6.3%
Total	515	27	5.2%

Note: The fatal injury may have occurred in a prior year.

Sixteen of the 27 homicides occurred in the Portland area; four more occurred in Marion County. Nine of the employees worked in the retail sector; seven worked in the service sector. Four local government workers and two state government workers also were killed. Seventeen of the 27 victims were men. Over the past three years, however, women were the victims in 7 of the 10 cases.

TRENDS IN VIOLENT CLAIMS

In 1995, the Oregon workers' compensation claims rate (the number of accepted disabling claims per 100 workers) was 2.1, the lowest ever recorded. The number of accepted disabling claims was 30,564, the lowest number since 1970. The number of violent claims dropped more than 40 percent between 1988 and 1991; it has remained nearly constant since 1992 (see Table 2). For the past four years, violent claims have been 1.3 percent of all accepted disabling claims. Each year, approximately three of every 10,000 Oregon workers have had an accepted disabling claim resulting from a violent incident.

In 1988, 32 percent of the violent claims came from the state hospital system. Much of the 1988-91 drop

resulted from changes at the state's Fairview Hospital. Because of the problems at the hospital, the staff was increased and given additional training, and the resident population was reduced. As a result, the number of violent claims at state hospitals dropped from 202 in 1988 to 61 in 1991; it fell further to 39 in 1995. The patients discharged from Fairview were placed in residential care programs run by private sector companies. There was no increase in violent claims from these companies during the 1988-91 period.

Table 2. Accepted disabling claims caused by violent acts, Oregon, 1988-1995

Acceptance year	Total violent claims	Claims of harmful intent	Claims of unknown intent	Violent claims as a % of all ADC	Violent claims per 10,000 workers
1988	629	101	528	1.4%	5.4
1989	456	80	376	1.2%	3.8
1990	422	79	343	1.2%	3.4
1991	359	72	287	1.1%	2.9
1992	396	87	309	1.3%	3.1
1993	390	104	286	1.3%	3.0
1994	403	134	269	1.3%	2.9
1995	392	152	240	1.3%	2.7
Total	3,447	809	2,638	1.3%	3.3

Notes: The 1995 rate per 10,000 workers is based on estimated employment data. The growth in the number of claims with harmful intent is a result of changes in codes.

TYPES OF INCIDENTS

After the department's first report on workplace violence, we saw the need for new codes to better identify violent claims. A code for "assaults and violent acts" was added midway through 1994 (see Table 3). The effect of this addition was to classify some claims in the "harmful intent" category instead of the "unknown intent" category. Also, beginning in 1993, new coding allowed the identification of mental stress claims caused by other people. These stress claims generally come from two types of incidents. The first type is a crime after which the victim suffers stress. Bank tellers and retail clerks are generally the claimants in these cases. The second type is harassment by coworkers or supervisors. Since mental stress claims are seldom accepted in Oregon, the harassment cases included here are the most abusive cases.

Because of these coding changes, an increasing percentage of the violent claims is being classified as being of harmful intent. This does not mean there is more

intentional violence; rather, the department is better able to identify intentional violence.

Table 3. Types of violent acts, Oregon, 1995

Type	Number	Percent
Assault or violent act	65	16.6%
Struck during a crime	47	12.0%
Shot	10	2.6%
Bitten by another person	7	1.8%
Stress caused by another person	23	5.9%
Total, harmful intent claims	152	38.8%
Struck by another person	189	48.2%
Other injury caused by another person	51	13.0%
Total, unknown intent claims	240	61.2%
Total, all violent claims	392	100.0%

In nearly half of the 1991-1995 incidents involving unknown intent, the incident resulted in a sprain or strain; more than a quarter of the injuries were either contusions or fractures. In 22 percent of the cases, the injury was to either the back or to the neck; in 19 percent of the incidents, there were injuries to multiple body parts.

As would be expected, crimes and shootings often occurred outside the normal work week. The most common days for violent claims resulting from crimes

or shootings were Friday, Saturday and Sunday; 56 percent of the incidents occurred between 6 p.m. and 3 a.m.

INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION

Violent claims are most likely to occur in the industries that involve frequent contact with clients, patrons or patients. Therefore, few of the violent accidents occurred in the Oregon industrial sectors with the highest overall claims rates: construction, transportation and public utilities, mining, manufacturing and agriculture. Instead, within the private sector, most of the violent claims were in the service and retail trade sectors (see Table 4). Within the service sector, seventy percent of the claims were from health and social services industries. Fewer than 10 percent of the claims in these industries were defined as harmful intent claims; most were cases in which the worker was struck by another person. Within the health services industry, most of the incidents occurred in nursing and personal care facilities and in hospitals. The injured workers were usually nursing aides and registered nurses. Within the social services industry, most of the incidents occurred in residential care facilities. Again, most of the injured workers were nursing aides or other health aides.

Table 4. Violent claims by industrial sector, Oregon, 1991-1995

Industry	Total violent claims	Harmful intent	Unknown intent	Harmful as a % of violent	Viol. claims as a % of all ADC	Viol. claims per 10,000 workers
Agriculture	16	3	13	18.8%	0.2%	0.6
Mining	1	0	1	0.0%	0.3%	1.2
Construction	26	7	19	26.9%	0.2%	0.9
Manufacturing	88	19	69	21.6%	0.2%	0.8
Trans. & public utilities	44	20	24	45.5%	0.3%	1.4
Wholesale trade	31	12	19	38.7%	0.4%	0.7
Retail trade	307	176	131	57.3%	1.1%	2.5
Food stores	72	58	14	80.6%	1.5%	-
Eating & drinking est.	127	55	72	43.3%	1.4%	-
Finance, ins., real estate	46	26	20	56.5%	1.6%	1.1
Services	731	122	609	16.7%	2.5%	4.5
Business services	88	42	46	47.7%	1.2%	-
Health services	293	20	273	6.8%	3.3%	-
Social services	223	24	199	10.8%	7.5%	-
State government	321	36	285	11.2%	8.9%	10.3
Health services	253	16	237	6.3%	19.2%	-
Local government	329	128	201	38.9%	3.0%	4.8
Educational services	125	16	109	12.8%	2.8%	-
Executive gov.	78	54	24	69.2%	3.5%	-
Public order & safety	65	35	30	53.8%	5.9%	-
Total	1,940	549	1,391	28.3%	1.3%	2.9

Note: Claim rates are available only for the industrial sectors.

Also within the service sector, the business services industry had a fairly high number of violent claims. Many of the incidents occurred to guards working for security service companies or personnel leasing companies. Nearly three-quarters of these guards' claims were classified as harmful intent claims.

The retail sector is the other private sector group with a large number of violent claims. Nearly two-thirds of these claims came from eating and drinking establishments and from food stores. In the restaurant industry, over 40 percent of the claims were classified as resulting from harmful intent. In the grocery stores, over 80 percent were classified as resulting from harmful intent.

Despite the large drop in claims resulting from changes at Fairview Hospital, state government continued to have the highest violent claims rate, 10.3 per 10,000 workers. Nearly 80 percent of the claims occurred in the state hospital system. Nineteen percent of all accepted disabling claims from the hospital system were violent claims. As in the private sector health industry, most of the cases involved nursing aides being struck by another person.

In local government, 38 percent of the violent claims occurred in the educational system. The injured workers were generally teachers or teachers' aides. Forty-three percent of the incidents occurred to people working for executive government or public order agencies. The claimants were mostly police and prison

guards. (The police force of Portland is covered by a city administered fund. Their claims are not reported to this department, so they are not included in this study.)

As seen from the previous discussion, the most frequent victims of violent acts are nursing aides. They were involved in a quarter of all cases (see Table 5). Registered nurses and dental and other health aides were involved in another five percent of the incidents. Most of these people's claims involved violence of unknown intent; only 36 of the 599 claims were the result of a known attempt to inflict injury. As with nursing aides, the violent incidents against teachers and counselors were mostly of unknown intent.

Police, corrections guards and security guards were the second most frequently injured group of workers. This group accounted for over 13 percent of the violent claims. Two-thirds of the claims were the result of harmful intent, with half of the accidents occurring during the commission of a crime.

For most other workers, violent claims were around one percent of all accepted disabling claims. Retail sales workers and other retail sector laborers suffered, especially from crimes. Food service workers and other service workers and managers suffered violence in restaurants and taverns. Administrative support workers and managers employed in service industries, the finance and real estate industry and in government also suffered from violent acts, often from assaults or crimes.

Table 5. Occupations most frequently involved in violent claims, Oregon, 1991-1995

Occupation	Total violent claims	Harmful intent	Unknown intent	Harmful as a % of violent	Viol. claims as a % of all ADC
Nursing aides	494	28	466	5.7%	9.5%
Police, guards	262	174	88	66.4%	12.1%
Teachers, counselors	108	6	102	5.6%	6.8%
Service occupations	96	22	74	22.9%	1.1%
Food services	93	32	61	34.4%	0.9%
Laborers	84	41	43	48.8%	0.4%
Retail sales workers	83	50	33	60.2%	1.5%
Administrative support	77	42	35	54.5%	1.0%
Management occupations	55	24	31	43.6%	2.1%
Registered nurses	54	3	51	5.6%	3.4%
Bus drivers	53	23	30	43.4%	3.8%
Health, dental aides	51	5	46	9.8%	6.8%
Other occupations	413	93	320	22.5%	0.5%
Total	1,923	543	1,380	28.2%	1.3%

Note: Seventeen claims for which the occupation is unknown are excluded.

GENDER AND AGE

Women suffer a disproportionate percentage of the violent incidents. While women made up just under one-third of all claimants with accepted disabling claims, they accounted for 57 percent of the claimants with violent claims (see Table 6). Eighty-two percent of the violent claims involving women were of unknown intent. About 83 percent of the workers with violent claims in the health services industry (private and public sectors) and 67 percent of the workers with claims in the education system were women.

Men were the victims in 63 percent of the harmful incidents and in 74 percent of the crimes. Of the 174 police and guards hurt in harmful incidents, 147 were men.

COUNTY OF INJURY

Despite the improvement in the state hospital system, violent claims are still a comparatively large percentage of all accepted disabling claims in Marion County (see Table 7). They are 3.4 percent of all ADC claims, compared to the state-wide average of 1.3 percent. Of the 374 claims, 234 were from state government, most from the state hospitals.

Table 6. Violent claims by claimant gender and age, Oregon, 1991-1995

Gender	Age	Total violent claims	Harmful intent	Unknown intent	Harmful as a % of violent	Viol. claims as a % of all ADC
Women	Under 18	8	2	6	25.0%	1.3%
	18-24	161	33	128	20.5%	2.3%
	25-34	341	68	273	19.9%	2.5%
	35-44	349	69	280	19.8%	2.3%
	45-54	179	25	154	14.0%	1.8%
	55 & over	65	6	59	9.2%	1.5%
		1,103	203	900	18.4%	2.2%
Men	Under 18	10	6	4	60.0%	1.1%
	18-24	144	59	85	41.0%	0.9%
	25-34	294	110	184	37.4%	0.9%
	35-44	221	89	132	40.3%	0.8%
	45-54	124	58	66	46.8%	0.7%
	55 & over	42	24	18	57.1%	0.5%
		835	346	489	41.4%	0.8%
Total		1,938	549	1,389	28.3%	1.3%

Note: Two claims for which the age were unknown are excluded.

About 42 percent of the violent incidents occurred in the Portland region. This is similar to the percentage for all accepted disabling claims. However, half of the harmful intent claims were from the Portland area. The area had 65 percent of the harmful intent claims in the finance, insurance and real estate industries, and 54 percent of the harmful intent claims in the retail industry. This area also had 42 percent of the harmful intent claims from local government, despite the exclusion of the Portland police department.

Table 7. Violent claims by county of injury, Oregon, 1991-1995

Region	Total violent claims	Harmful intent	Unknown intent	Harmful as a % of violent	Viol. claims as a % of all ADC
Portland	758	252	506	33.2%	1.2%
Marion County	374	55	319	14.7%	3.4%
Lane County	153	43	110	28.1%	1.2%
Willamette Valley	132	28	104	21.2%	1.2%
SW Oregon	183	55	128	30.1%	1.0%
NW Oregon	56	19	37	33.9%	0.9%
Central Oregon	67	17	50	25.4%	0.8%
Eastern Oregon	78	19	59	24.4%	1.0%
Out of state	15	10	5	66.7%	0.6%
Total	1,816	498	1,318	27.4%	1.3%

The following regional groupings are used:

Portland: Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties;

Willamette Valley: Yamhill, Polk, Linn and Benton counties;

SW Oregon: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine and Klamath counties;

NW Oregon: Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties;

Central Oregon: Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Jefferson, Wheeler, Crook and Deschutes counties;

Eastern Oregon : Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Grant, Baker, Lake, Harney and Malheur counties.

COSTS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Another way to measure the impact of violence in the workplace is by the dollar cost of the claims. For 1991-1995, the average cost of a claim resulting from a violent act was \$8,795, and involved 69 days of time loss (see Table 8). Because of additional medical costs, the claims involving harmful intent are more expensive than average.

The costs in the table do not include fatality benefits. We have little information on the costs of fatalities; however, for the eight fatal cases closed in 1994 and 1995 for which data are available, the average medical cost was \$9,146, and the average indemnity cost was \$99,083.

Table 8. Claim costs for violent claims, Oregon, 1991-1995

	Violent claims	Harmful intent	Unknown intent
Claims closed	1,840	455	1,385
Average costs			
Medical	\$5,045	\$8,019	\$4,068
Time loss	\$2,567	2,837	\$2,478
PPD awards	\$1,184	\$1,387	\$1,117
Ave. total costs	\$8,795	\$12,243	\$7,663
Ave. time loss days	69	80	65

Note: The table shows the estimated average costs of claims closed in 1991-95. It includes determination orders and insurer closures that closed accepted disabling claims. It excludes litigation orders and medical only cases. Costs and time loss were estimated from data reported to the department at the time of claim closure. The data exclude medical costs and time loss costs incurred after the request for determination. The data also exclude permanent total disability and fatality benefits, all DCS and CDA amounts and litigation awards.

CONCLUSIONS

In Oregon, the violent workers' compensation claims can be grouped into three principal categories. The largest group of claims come from incidents in the health and social service industries and the educational

system. In these cases, nursing aides, other health aides, teachers, teachers' aides and counselors are struck by someone. We do not know much about these incidents, especially not the intent of the person who struck the worker, except that they produced severe injuries. The second group of violent claims are from the incidents which occur to those workers for whom some violence is an inevitable part of the job: police, security guards and corrections officers,. The third group of claims come from the incidents in which workers are the victims of crime or assaults. These workers are most often retail clerks, bank tellers, administrative support personnel, office managers and bus drivers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This report is an update of an earlier report, *Violence in the Workplace, Oregon, 1988 to 1992*, published in 1994. The Information Management Division also publishes two reports on workplace fatalities. The *Oregon Industrial Fatality Report* covers compensable fatalities. The *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, Fatal Work-Related Injuries, Oregon* report provides information on the Oregon data provided to the BLS for the CFOI program. These reports are available upon request from the division. Also, the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division can provide additional information and consultative services.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides national information on workplace violence and other types of injuries and illnesses gathered through their annual survey. They also provide data on workplace fatalities gathered for the CFOI program. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health published *Violence in the Workplace: Risk Factors and Prevention Strategies*, in 1996. Also, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has released suggested guidelines for reducing violence in the health services industry and in the retail sector.

APPENDIX A. METHODOLOGY

When a claim is received by the Department of Consumer and Business Services, Workers' Compensation Division, it is delivered to the Claim Coding Unit for data entry. The coding system used during the period of this report was the American National Standards Institute Z16.2-1962 (R1969) Method of Recording Basic Facts Relating to the Nature and Occurrence of Work Injuries, supplemented with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expanded coding method for the Supplementary Data System.

Cases of harmful violence were identified by having one of the following type codes:

- 1) "Struck, stabbed, beaten in the act of a crime";
- 2) "Shot by";
- 3) "Assaults & violent acts";
- 4) "Bitten by" with the source of the bite being another person; or
- 5) "Occupational mental stress" with the source being another person.

Cases of unknown intent were identified in the following manner, either:

- 1) "Struck by a co-worker, patient, or patron"; or
- 2) the source of injury was another person, provided that the injury was not self inflicted (for instance, overexertion while lifting a patient).

The "assaults & violent acts" code was added to the coding system in 1994. It was added to identify harmful intent incidents that weren't covered by one of the other codes. Before this change, these incidents were covered by the "struck by co-worker, patient or patron" code. This coding change resulted in the identification of more harmful intent claims.

The secondary source code was added in 1993. This allows the identification of mental stress claims caused by other people. These claims were not included in the 1988-92 data; there were 70 cases in 1993-95. About half of these claims occurred after people were the victims of crimes; the most common case involved bank tellers who suffered trauma after robberies. Most of the other cases involved harassment from co-workers and supervisors. While the claimants in these cases did not suffer physical injury, they did suffer enough stress that their claims were accepted as disabling (in Oregon, mental stress claims are usually denied). In most of these cases, the claimants were singled out for harassment.

In 1996, the department adopted the Occupational Injury and Illness Classification System developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This coding system has separate codes for patient, coworkers and others, so in the future the department will have better information about the perpetrators of violent incidents.



Information Management Division
350 Winter St NE, Room 300
Salem, OR 97310
(503) 378-8254