

Occupational Accidents & Illnesses Statistics in Korea

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1. INTRODUCTION

Industrial safety statistics in Korea is based on reports collected from employers. If an industrial accident takes place, an employer concerned is required to present the head of the competent local labor office with an official reporting form, 'Industrial Accident Investigation Chart'. This reporting form, however, can be replaced if the 'Request for Recuperation' has been filed to the Korea Labor Welfare Corporation pursuant to the Industrial Safety and Health Act. It implies that the source of the statistics, in fact, lies in the Request for Recuperation rather than the said Chart. In this respect, we are aware that the former provides less information than the latter. Thus we are preparing and initiating several plans for relieving information shortage. The current procedures of compiling statistics involve receiving compensation data through the on-line transmission system between the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency and the Korea Labor Welfare Corporation, completing statistics with given data, and disseminating complete statistics for the public use including government offices, private establishments and the Agency's affiliated institutions.

2. THE SCOPE OF STATISTICS

The statistics covers compensated occupational fatality, injuries and diseases where workers were fully or partly unable to perform their normal duties at least 4 days. All other occupation groups are not covered by 'Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance', therefore fall beyond the scope of the statistics. These occupation groups include government employees, military personnel, fishery workers and private school lecturers, all of which are covered by different compensation schemes.

3. THE TREND IN THE NATIONAL STATISTICS

Occupational accidents and diseases in Korea are very closely related with the increase of economic population and industrial development. In the early 1960's as the beginning of economic growth in Korea, the rate of occupational accidents and diseases was very low. From the 1970's when the economic development was activated, occupational accidents and disease became a serious social issue. In the 1980's, the labor economy was rapidly changing due to development of new industries and innovative technologies, resulting in worsening of working conditions and environment. Occupational accidents and diseases were diversified and increased in severity and frequency. In the 1990's, however, they have decreased significantly owing to changing awareness at the workplaces and steady accident prevention activities by the government. However, the graph below shows a sharp increase in the total number of occupational accidents and diseases during 1998 and 1999. This largely resulted from adverse impact on the economy caused by the financial crisis. Moreover the trend of the total number is likely to rise further since the coverage of Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance expanded to establishments where more than 1 worker is employed from July of 2000.

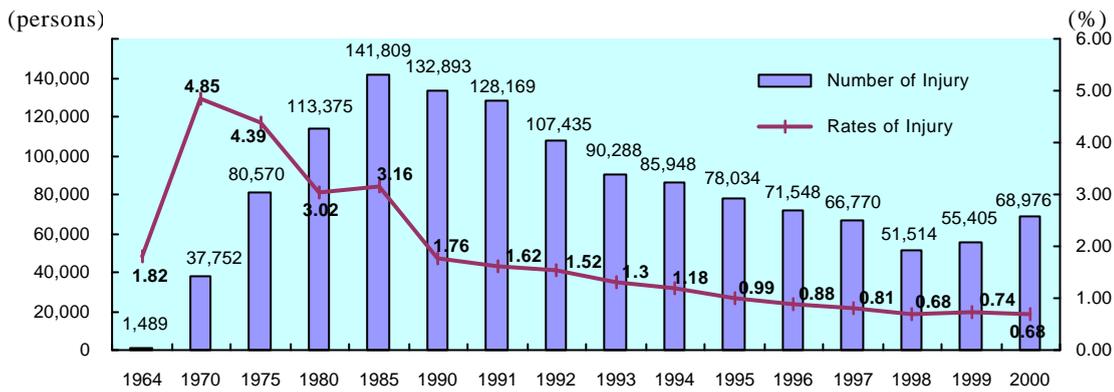


Figure 1. Trend of Injury occurrences

4. OTHER ASPECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY STATISTICS

As mentioned earlier, the current industrial safety statistics is subject to the compensation data that does not cover all economic sectors. Consequently it has inherent limit in the international comparison. The most significant limit involves the current statistics not based on the date of incident occurred. We have attempted to carry out sample surveys on the basis of all economic sectors and the date of the incident, which is designed to overcome these obstacles and provide timely and reliable service. In order to picture a whole frame of incident characteristics in more details, we implement a national survey consisting of two parts; a sample survey on 10% of total occupational injuries and a census survey on fatality and occupational disease. The survey is expected to provide concrete information regarding nature of injury or disease which describes physical characteristics of the fatality, injury and disease, source or cause which identifies the object or substance that directly or indirectly inflicted the fatality, injury or disease, and event or exposure which describes the manner in which the fatality, injury or illness was inflicted by the source or cause.

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