



WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY
FOR NEW ZEALAND TO 2015

National Action Agenda 2010–2013

MARCH 2011



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Minister's Foreword

The National Action Agenda 2010–2013 marks a shift in our strategy to reduce the work toll. It sharpens the focus on action and bridges the gap between the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015 and the activities of workers on the frontline.

New Zealand's health and safety performance is not where it should be despite the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy being in place for 5 years. The Strategy's aim is to reduce injuries and fatalities at work and deliver healthy and productive workplaces for all New Zealanders, but we have yet to see a significant reduction in our injury and fatality rates. The social and financial cost of workplace injury and illness is still much too high. We need to do better, and it is in everyone's interest to improve – government, industry, employers and workers.

This Action Agenda focuses on the five sectors with consistently high levels of injuries and fatalities – construction, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and fishing. It sets out health and safety priorities for the next 3 years at both a sector and a national level. Actions will be delivered through partnerships with industry leaders and worker representatives.

The Action Agenda and its Sector Action Plans will allow us to make a very real difference by the end of 2013. The Sector Action Plans target the risks and hazards that are causing injury and illness and focus on reducing the toll of workplace injuries, fatalities and disease. They will be owned by each sector, with government agencies playing a supporting role.

The deaths of 29 miners at the Pike River Coal mine in November 2010 are a reminder of the narrow line between safety and tragedy and should be a spur to us all to put health and safety initiatives at the forefront of our business planning.

I strongly encourage you to be part of preparing and delivering the five Sector Action Plans. It is only by combining our skills, knowledge and leadership with action in the five priority sectors that we will achieve the vision of 'healthy people in safe and productive workplaces'.

Hon Kate Wilkinson
Minister of Labour
March 2011



A New Action Agenda for Workplace Health and Safety

This Action Agenda sets a new direction for action under the national Workplace Health and Safety Strategy. The key drivers for this change in approach are as follows:

■ New Zealand's work toll

New Zealand's work toll is too high, and the rates are not falling. At an estimated \$16 billion a year,¹ the cost is around 10% of gross domestic product.

Evidence shows that:

- workplace injuries are killing about 100 people a year
- more than 700 people die prematurely from work-related illness or disease every year
- more than 200,000 people are seriously harmed every year, requiring them to make an ACC claim
- there are more than 17,000 new cases of work-related disease every year, with between 2,500–5,500 being classed as severe
- construction, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and fishing consistently have above average fatal and major injury rates. These sectors account for 37% percent of all ACC claims (see profile in Appendix 1).

It is the Government's expectation that New Zealand's work toll will improve over the next 3 years.

■ Review of the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015

In 2009, a review of the national Workplace Health and Safety Strategy found that clearer direction is needed to engage stakeholders at a workplace level. There was collective agreement that a more focused set of achievable actions will fill the gap between the high-level Strategy and activity on the ground.

The five priority areas highlighted by the review, which have guided the development of this Action Agenda, are:

- the need for a sector-based approach
- improved focus and delivery for occupational health issues
- improved workplace capability, guidance and standards (especially for small businesses)
- improved competency standards for health and safety professionals
- increased worker participation in workplaces, including health and safety representative training.

■ The global downturn and economic recovery

In the recessionary environment, many businesses have been forced to cut costs and have been under pressure to invest less in baseline expenses such as workplace health and safety. Indicators such as the incidence of workplace injuries tend to reduce in recessions, as fewer people are in work and reduced numbers of people are working longer hours.

However, when employment rises in the recovery period, health and safety injuries and fatalities may rise as hours of work increase and new workers are hired. The more rapid the recovery, the more marked this upward pressure is likely to be, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and construction.

1. New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, *Volume 1 Risk Landscape*, Report to the Department of Labour, May 2008.



The Action Agenda

This Action Agenda identifies a discrete set of national-level actions that will be delivered progressively over the next 3 years and will demonstrate the Government's commitment to improving health and safety in New Zealand workplaces.

THE ACTIONS WILL BE DELIVERED UNDER THE FOUR ACTION AREAS:

- 1 GROWING SAFETY LEADERSHIP
- 2 DEVELOPING CAPABILITY
- 3 BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
- 4 SUPPORTING A ROBUST HEALTH AND SAFETY SYSTEM

The Action Agenda signals a narrower and deeper focus by concentrating on **priority sectors** and setting **specific actions** that will reduce the toll of workplace injuries, fatalities and disease. The Action Agenda is focusing on areas where a marked and measurable difference can be made over the next 3 years.

THE FIVE PRIORITY SECTORS ARE:

CONSTRUCTION

AGRICULTURE

FORESTRY

MANUFACTURING

FISHING

The Action Agenda will ensure government agencies prioritise their work programmes to focus on these five sectors. These sectors have the highest risks of ill health, injury or death. Within each of the five sectors, stakeholders will be encouraged to work together, concentrating their combined skills and resources on fewer priorities.

Each of the five sectors will have an individual **3-year Sector Action Plan**.

These plans are intended to provide a rallying point for all key players to:

- build shared leadership and ownership of the problems and solutions
- agree on key priorities for action
- coordinate and integrate activity.

Each Sector Action Plan will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders in New Zealand's health and safety system, in each of the priority sectors. The Department of Labour will lead the development of the construction, agriculture, forestry and manufacturing Sector Action Plans. Maritime New Zealand will lead the development of the fishing Sector Action Plan.

The success of this Action Agenda depends on each sector 'owning' their Sector Action Plan. Government agencies will do all they can to support and encourage engagement and action.

■ Developing closer working partnerships

A major focus of the Action Agenda over the next 3 years will be to develop effective partnerships in the priority sectors. Over recent years, a number of committed health and safety stakeholder groups have shown that they want to be more effectively engaged.

The needs and influence of the groups listed below will be addressed by the Action Agenda's activities over the next 3 years:

- **Small businesses** face challenges in accessing health and safety information and advice, as well as ensuring appropriate, tailored and targeted tools and guidance are available to them. They also make a large and unique contribution to the New Zealand economy and their communities.
- **Workers** must be encouraged and supported to actively participate in health and safety in their workplaces. Engaging both employers and employees on worker participation and raising



awareness that leadership can come from all levels will be an ongoing focus.

- **Business leaders** have the ability to influence and champion positive safety cultures within their firms and across their supply chains. The emerging Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum demonstrates this potential.
- **Sector health and safety leadership groups** are being established in some of the priority sectors. They are able to develop and implement industry actions to drive change and form a contact point for stronger engagement with government. Ideally, these need to include worker representation where possible.
- **Iwi** groups are increasingly significant business players, but **Māori workers** are over-represented in most of the high-risk sectors (for example, fishing, forestry and construction).
- **Pacific** business and community leaders and employers with a large number of Pacific employees are well placed to influence and facilitate change among workers and their families. Pacific people are a growing part of the New Zealand workforce and have been traditionally over-represented in the service and manufacturing industries, which account for a significant number of workplace injuries.

■ Addressing the burden of occupational disease

Providing more focus and delivery for occupational health issues was one of the main areas for focus to come out of the review of the national Strategy. This Action Agenda will address this often hidden but significant problem. 17,000 new cases of work-related disease are reported every year.

Over the next 3 years, the Action Agenda will provide for:

- improved surveillance of work-related diseases
- improved awareness and understanding of occupational health issues facing workers
- sector-specific actions in the Sector Action Plans on key areas where disease is occurring, including consideration of the management of hazardous substances
- development of a national Occupational Health Action Plan, which includes provision for systems to collect accurate data on occupational disease, mortality and incidence.



■ The framework for action



The diagram above shows how the Action Agenda sits below and feeds into the national Workplace Health and Safety Strategy. The actions and activities in each of the five sectors of construction, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and fishing will be guided by the four action areas of leadership, capability, knowledge and health and safety systems.

■ ACTION AREA 1: GROWING SAFETY LEADERSHIP

Leading health and safety is everyone’s business – government, industry and workers all play a significant role. Quality leadership is important at both governance and management levels, but it is just as important on the shop floor, ensuring the active involvement of workers at every level.

Business, worker and sector leaders are in the unique position to set the direction and clear a path for those already engaged in the technical and operational side of health and safety.

Leadership is more than just how senior a person is. It is more about their commitment and drive and their dedication to ensuring that health and safety is a fundamental part of their everyday business. These qualities can and do exist at all levels in workplaces, and we need to find ways to harness that positive energy.

The priorities for 2010–2013 are:

- building effective and viable safety leadership in business and government and in sector leaders and stakeholders involved in workplace health and safety
- better coordination of health and safety activity focused on reducing the toll of workplace injuries, fatalities and disease in our high-risk sectors.

The actions for 2010–2013:

- 1.1 Industry health and safety leadership groups will be established within each of the priority sectors, including worker representation where possible, by December 2011.



1.2 Development and progressive release of Sector Action Plans for construction, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and fishing, which will include interventions to address identified areas to reduce the injury toll, by June 2011.

1.3 A Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum, publicly launched in July 2010, will start improving, harnessing and focusing safety leadership in New Zealand towards zero harm in workplaces.

1.4 The formation of a leadership forum and health and safety network of government

agencies with lead responsibilities in health and safety and involved in safety critical work by 2013.

Performance will be demonstrated by:

- increasing numbers of established health and safety leadership groups
- Sector Action Plans being publicly released
- increasing numbers of business leaders signing up to the Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum
- increasing numbers of initiatives that demonstrate a joint approach.

■ ACTION AREA 2: DEVELOPING CAPABILITY

Capability involves equipping people and organisations with the necessary skills and confidence and providing the opportunity for them to contribute to improved workplace health and safety. Capability is critical for building healthy, safe and productive workplaces. This applies equally to small and large businesses and is critical to the work of professional groups and government agencies charged with developing health and safety policy.

The priorities for 2010–2013 are:

- improving employee capacity to engage in the health and safety management process through the training of health and safety representatives
- improving capability for small business
- strengthening the competency framework for health and safety professionals
- developing a code of ethics for health and safety professionals.

The actions for 2010–2013:

2.1 A Health and Safety Professional Alliance (HaSPA) will be established in New Zealand by June 2012.

2.2 The capability of health and safety representatives will continue to be improved through training.

2.3 Online learning modules delivering health and safety representative training will be developed by December 2011.

2.4 A website providing health and safety representatives with information to support them in their role and enable them to be part of a wider peer support network will be operational by December 2011.

2.5 New practical tools for small business in the priority sectors will be developed and promoted by December 2013.

Performance will be demonstrated by:

- increasing numbers of people signing up to the health and safety representatives' website
- increasing numbers of trained health and safety representatives
- increased use of new support tools for small business.



■ ACTION AREA 3: BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Developing effective systems, processes and policy requires sound knowledge. Knowledge informs leadership and fuels the development and maintenance of capacity in health and safety in our workplaces. Knowledge includes health and safety research, incidence data, occupational health data and international trends.

The priorities for 2010–2013 are:

- improving standards and guidance in priority sectors
- sharpening our data collection and dissemination in the priority sectors
- improving health and safety surveillance and workplace data, particularly health and safety metrics to assist sectors and workplaces to benchmark their performance.

The actions for 2010–2013:

3.1 A pilot national surveillance system for occupational diseases will be developed by

December 2011.

3.2 The first State of Workplace Health and Safety in New Zealand report will be published by February 2011.

3.3 Systematic analysis of the Statistics New Zealand official injury data set will be completed by December 2011.

Performance will be demonstrated by:

- an operational pilot occupational health surveillance system
- a State of Workplace Health and Safety report produced and published annually from March 2011
- the official injury data set being used to inform ongoing policy and intervention development
- an increased knowledge and understanding of the specific health and safety problems and trends within the priority sectors.

■ ACTION AREA 4: SUPPORTING A ROBUST HEALTH AND SAFETY SYSTEM

Our workplaces do not operate in isolation. We have a legislative framework of statute and regulation in the Health and Safety in Employment (HSE) Act, the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act and the worker compensation and rehabilitation scheme (ACC), with associated standards and guidance. There are also a range of training organisations and workplace-specific systems and processes.

In combination, these constitute the infrastructure for health and safety in the workplace – the underpinning health and safety system. This system enables the expectations of government, industry and the community to be met and provides the tools required for health and safety in New Zealand workplaces to achieve higher levels of performance.

Priorities for 2010–2013 are:

- progressively reviewing Department of Labour regulations, standards and guidance in the priority sectors
- increasing emphasis on occupational health through a more focused programme of activity under both the HSE and HSNO Acts
- maintaining consistent application of the HSE and HSNO Acts in workplaces in the five priority sectors
- providing more effective information and promotion of key health and safety messages in the priority sectors
- increasing understanding of industry self-regulation models and how they can be used in New Zealand



- improving financial incentives to improve workplace safety and encourage good rehabilitation after a personal injury
- helping employers with poor injury and illness statistics to improve the health and safety of their workplaces.

The actions for 2010–2013:

- 4.1 Health and safety-related standards and guidance for the priority sectors will be progressively reviewed and updated between July 2010 and June 2013.
- 4.2 ACC will introduce experience rating by April 2011.
- 4.3 A national Occupational Health Action Plan for 2011–2013 will be developed by December 2011.
- 4.4 Strategic enforcement action will be progressively directed to all priority sectors by December 2013.
- 4.5 An investigation of industry self-regulation models against models in other jurisdictions will be completed and published by December 2011.
- 4.6 A joint agency plan for promoting health and safety and injury prevention messages in the

priority sectors will be developed by June 2011.

Performance will be demonstrated by:

- reviewing and updating the range of standards and guidance material for the priority sectors to ensure that duty holders have access to information that will support them to meet the HSE Act's requirements
- an Occupational Health Action Plan that has significant buy-in from occupational health professionals and health practitioners and researchers
- experience rating introduced
- enforcement activity that demonstrates that enforcement responses are fair, impartial, consistent and proportionate to the seriousness and extent of any harm or the potential for harm in any given situation
- a clear consensus on the core elements and place of industry self-governance within New Zealand's existing workplace health and safety framework
- an increased understanding of the role of industry self-governance within New Zealand's existing workplace health and safety framework.

Where we want to be in 3 years

We want to see substantial progress in achieving the national Strategy's vision of 'healthy people in safe and productive workplaces'. This will be demonstrated by:

- the Action Agenda's actions being completed on schedule and achieving their intended outcomes
- working partnerships between government and industry resulting in positive improvements in health and safety in the five priority sectors
- effective programmes in place to reduce the toll of workplace injuries, fatalities and disease
- a statistically significant reduction in New Zealand's workplace injury and fatality rates
- reliable health and safety data and better access to it.



A shared commitment – Partners in Action

The Government cannot achieve the outcomes of the Strategy or the goals of the Action Agenda alone. Leadership, support, provision of information and standards for industry along with strategic enforcement from the Department of Labour and other regulatory agencies are critical elements in improving workplace health and safety performance, but they are not sufficient to effect change. Making a real difference to the work toll requires commitment from all parties, with this commitment driving purposeful action at all levels.

A pledge has been devised as a symbolic acknowledgement of the collaborative approach needed between government, business, industry organisations, unions, and health and safety

professionals and practitioners. Stakeholders that are willing to do their part to achieve zero harm in the workplace can become Partners in Action with the Department of Labour as the lead agency.

The process for becoming a Partner is simple, with individuals and organisations being invited to 'pledge' their commitment to working to reduce the work toll in their areas of influence. Partners will be kept in the loop about the Department's activities via regular communication and will be recognised on the Department's website. Partners will also provide a valuable source of information about health and safety activity and issues at a workplace or industry level.

Visit www.dol.govt.nz/whss to sign up.

The Pledge

As an individual/organisation with a stake in achieving the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy's vision of 'healthy people in safe and productive workplaces', I/we accept the challenge to become a Partner in Action with the Department of Labour to reduce New Zealand's work toll.

As a Partner in Action, I/we agree to:

- play an active role within my/our sphere of influence to improve health and safety outcomes at work
- contribute to and support the Action Agenda and the Sector Action Plans
- work towards achieving zero harm in New Zealand workplaces.

Everyone Contributes

Many different groups can make an important contribution to realising the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy vision of 'healthy people in safe and productive workplaces'.

- **Government:** Maintains a robust legislative framework for workplace health and safety, leads the national Strategy and Action Agenda, is active in workplaces and is clear about its role and why it intervenes.
- **Workplace Health and Safety Council:** Actively engages as the peak body for New Zealand health and safety and is an effective conduit for the businesses and workers it represents.
- **Accident Compensation Corporation:** An active partner in injury prevention and provides comprehensive no-fault personal injury cover for all New Zealand residents and visitors. ACC leads New Zealand Injury Prevention Strategy initiatives, programmes and incentives to promote health and safety outcomes.



- **Employers:** Meet their responsibilities to manage hazards and keep their workplaces safe, routinely reporting health and safety performance as part of their commitment and engaging positively with health and safety representatives in their workplace.
 - **Workers/employees:** Well informed and taking responsibility for the health and safety of others and themselves.
 - **Unions:** Engaged with employers and government in standard setting processes, advocating on behalf of members, ensuring effective worker participation in workplace health and safety and providing support for the national network of health and safety representatives.
 - **Industry associations and peak bodies:** Communicate industry-tailored guidance, train and support their membership and promote quality standards.
 - **Business and sector leaders:** Champion health and safety and drive positive change and strategic direction in their workplaces and benchmark health and safety performance to achieve workplace health and safety targets.
- **Health and safety representatives:** Are advocates and champions for health and safety and are involved in health and safety management in their workplaces.
 - **Occupational health professionals:** Utilise their skills fully in providing symptomatic relief and restored function for workers and are engaged in developing the wider system for occupational health.
 - **Researchers:** Provide careful systematic study and investigation into the occupational health and safety field of knowledge.
 - **Health and safety professionals:** Prevent work-related ill health and injuries through their expertise in organisational health and safety management systems including risk assessment, setting high standards and raising awareness of health and safety in the wider workplace.

Monitoring and Review

The Department of Labour will continue to work closely with the Statistics New Zealand Injury Information Manager to ensure that the injury information collected by all agencies is increasingly presented in a way that tells a more joined-up story of how New Zealand is progressing. The Department of Labour will ensure access for interested stakeholders to better quality information on the state of health and safety in New Zealand.

The Department will undertake **activity performance monitoring** through:

- Sector Action Plan actions being completed on schedule
- effective sector leadership groups
- better access to more reliable health and safety data.

The Department will undertake **outcome monitoring** by ensuring that all activity programmes include indicators and measures of success, using the broad framework of:

- immediate measures of response to activity
- intermediate measures of changed awareness and/or practice in workplaces.

The Department will report annually on progress against high-level indicators for health and safety from February 2011 in an annual State of Health and Safety report.

This Action Agenda will be reviewed and updated by December 2013.



Appendix 1: priority sectors that make significant contributions to fatal and serious injuries

The **construction** sector is New Zealand's sixth largest, with approximately 180,000 workers.² In the most recent injury statistics,³ it had the third highest incidence rate of work-related injuries, with 149 claims per 1,000 FTEs.⁴ The fatal accident rate was more than three times the average for all sectors and remains the largest contributor to worker fatalities of any sector (34%). The fragmented and mobile nature of the sector, together with skill shortages and high use of non-standard employment arrangements, presents significant challenges to both the sector and regulator.

The **agriculture, forestry and fishing** sectors have around 150,000 workers,⁵ representing about 7% of the workforce in New Zealand. Despite this, the

sector was responsible for 15% of fatalities to workers in 2008. The incidence rate of work-related claims is highest in this sector, with 156 claims per 1,000 FTEs. The key causes of deaths have remained unchanged in the period 2002–2009, notably farm vehicles, being struck by falling trees, mobile plant, livestock handling, and slips, trips and falls on fishing vessels.

The **manufacturing** sector is New Zealand's second largest sector with around 257,000 workers,⁶ and it lodged 39,600 work-related claims (17% of all claims) in 2008.⁷ This was substantially higher than the number made by workers in any other industry, but the sector has the second highest incidence rate of work-related claims, with 150 claims per 1,000 FTEs.

2. Statistics NZ Household Labour Force Survey: December 2010 Quarter.

3. Injury and fatality data are from 2008, in the most recent Statistics NZ annual release of Injury Statistics – Work-related Claims: 2009 (released October 2010). The data are also indicative for other years.

4. Full-time equivalents.

5. Statistics NZ Household Labour Force Survey: December 2010 Quarter.

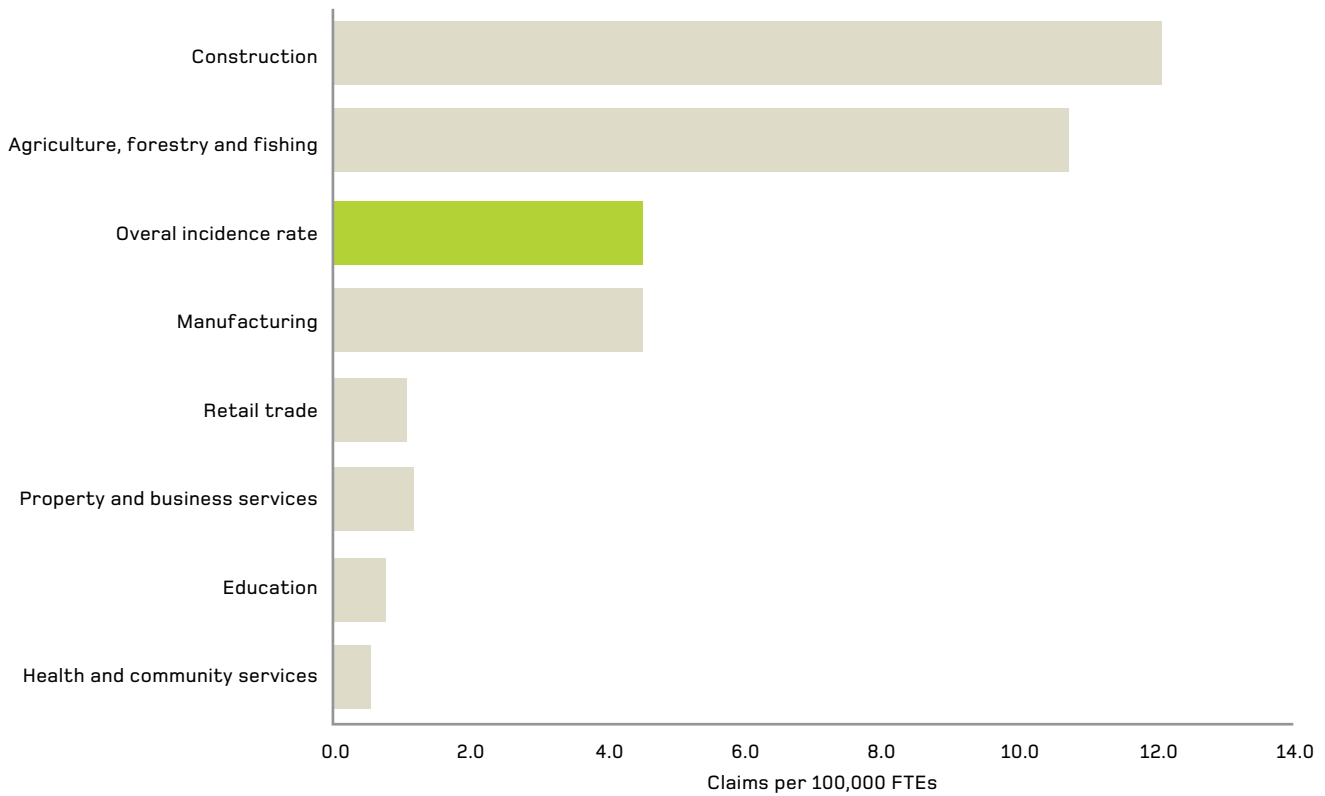
6. Statistics NZ Household Labour Force Survey: December 2010 Quarter.

7. Injury Statistics – Work-related Claims: 2009. Reported 31 March 2010 (ACC data).



■ Figure 1: Fatal injury rates to workers, averaged 2002–2008, for those sectors with 100,000 or more⁸ FTEs

Source: Injury Statistics – Work-related Claims: 2009 Reported 31 March 2010 (ACC data).

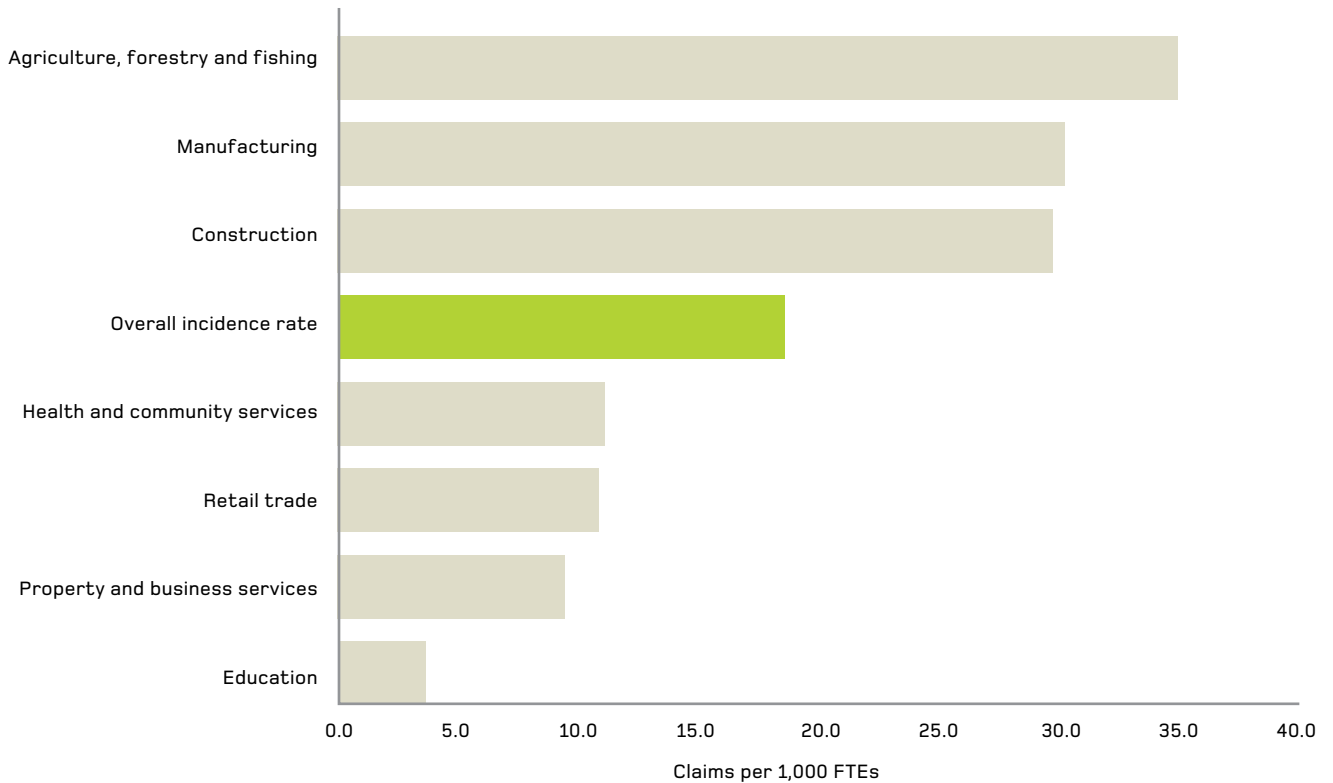


8. The list of sectors were limited to those with 100,000 or more because this provided those sectors that contribute the most to the New Zealand work toll.



■ Figure 2: Serious injury rates to workers, averaged 2002–2008, for those sectors with 100,000 or more FTEs

Source: Injury Statistics – Work-related Claims: 2009 Reported 31 March 2010 (ACC data).



■ Key causes of fatal and serious injuries

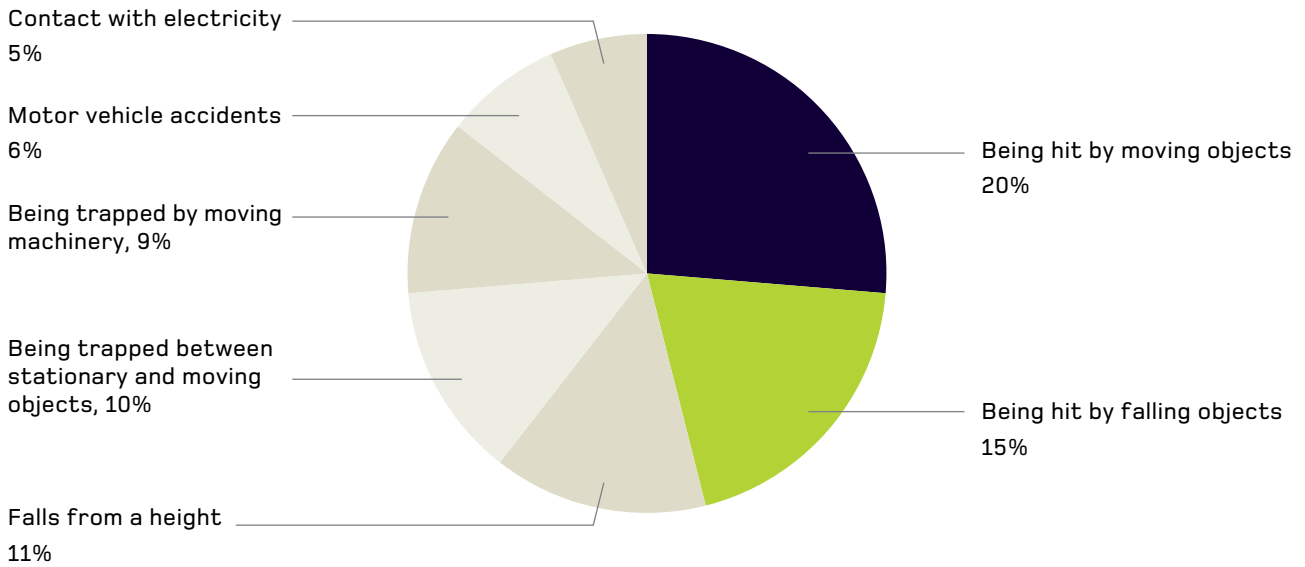
The top three common causes, accounting for almost half of all the fatalities when averaged over the past 4 years (see Figure 3) are:

- being hit by a moving object (**farm vehicles** accounted for 23%)
- being hit by a falling object (**tree felling** represented 13%)
- **falls from height** (48% occurred in the construction sector).



■ Figure 3: Main types of fatal injury to workers, averaged 2006–2009

Source: Department of Labour fatality data.

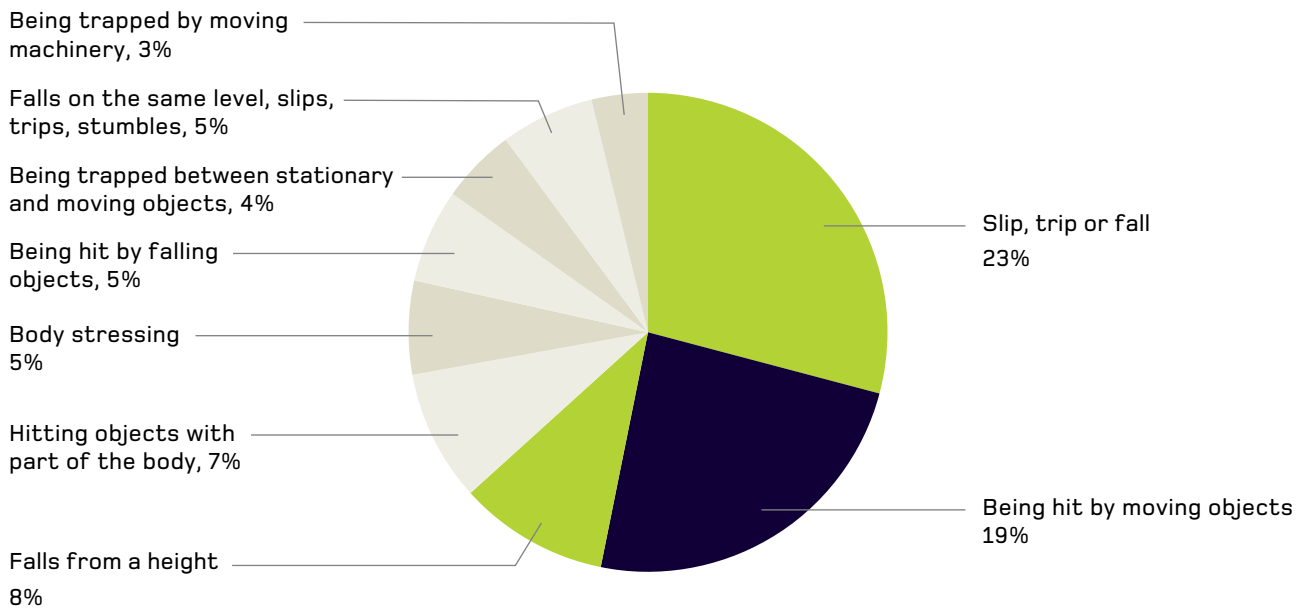


Hazards such as **slips, trips and falls from height** cause 31% of all serious harm in New Zealand workplaces (see Figure 4).



■ Figure 4: Main type of serious harm injury, averaged 2006–2009

Source: Department of Labour serious harm data.



In the manufacturing sector, 39% of injuries are caused by **machinery-related hazards**.

■ Key causes of current work-related ill health

In 2004, the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee (NOHSAC)⁹ reported the following findings by combining New Zealand and overseas data. Each year in New Zealand, there are:

- about 700–1,000 deaths from occupational disease, particularly cancer, respiratory disease and ischaemic heart disease
- about 100 deaths from occupational injury
- 17,000–20,000 new cases of work-related disease
- about 200,000 occupational accidents resulting in ACC claims, about half of which result in disability and about 6% in permanent disability.

9. National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee, *The Burden Of Occupational Disease And Injury In New Zealand*, 2004.





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