

What Can We Learn from the New BLS Occupational Injury and Illness Classifications?

Fatalities in the construction industry: Findings from a revision of the BLS Occupational Injury and Illness Classification System

Xiuwen Sue Dong, Julie Largay, Xuanwen Wang, and Janice Windau. Monthly Labor Review, July 2014.

Overview

The Occupational Injury and Illness Classification System (OIICS) was developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to characterize occupational injury and illness incidents. OIICS was originally released in 1992. The BLS redesigned OIICS in 2010 with subsequent revisions in 2012, thus the new version (version 2.01) is significantly different from the previous version (version 2007). This study examined the effects of the OIICS revisions on safety and health surveillance by analyzing leading causes of fatal injuries in the construction industry under the new and old OIICS. The results show that the new OIICS provides more detailed information than version 2007, thus enhancing the system's usefulness in injury prevention.

Key Findings

- Codes related to fall injuries are significantly changed in version 2.01. In addition to combining "Falls" with "Slip, trip, and loss of balance without fall", several categories related to falls are moved from "Event" to "Source."
- Under the new version, the majority of fall fatalities were attributed to roofs (34%), ladders (24%), and scaffolds (13%) as "Source" in 2011. In contrast, in 2010, 91% of fall fatalities were attributed to floors, walkways, and ground as "Source" under version 2007, which may be less helpful to researchers or safety professionals.
- The new OIICS provides information on falls by height. According to this new measure, about one-third of construction fall fatalities were falls from 15 feet or less in 2011.
- Transportation incidents are clearly defined by the new OIICS. Based on the new definitions, in 2011, 21 construction workers were killed by a forward-moving vehicle in a work zone, and 11 construction workers were killed by a vehicle backing up in a work zone.
- While the new OIICS provides measures and level of detail that are not available in the old OIICS, analyses across years will be more difficult because some categories before and after the update are no longer comparable.

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