

PRESS RELEASE



U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS UPDATES INDUSTRY FATALITY DATA

WASHINGTON, DC, December 16, 2016 – The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) today released 2015 final figures for industry and occupational fatality data. In its 2015 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary, BLS detailed that refuse and recyclable material collectors, as an occupation, ranked fifth among American workers, with a total of 33 fatalities in 2015, up from 27 in 2014 and 33 in 2013.

A National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) analysis of the just-released final data shows that a majority of this increase was attributable to an increase in fatalities in the private sector. For the refuse and recyclable material collectors, fatalities increased in the private sector to 24 up from 18 the prior year. Fatalities in the public sector for this occupation held steady at 9. Both the private and public sectors are one fatality over their five-year average. The incidence rate moved upward to 38.8 fatalities per 100,000 workers from 35.8 in 2014. BLS also analyzes data by industry, and in the industry defined as Solid Waste Collection in 2015, decreased by 10 percent to 36 fatalities, 27 in the private sector and 9 in the public sector. The data shows that the Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors occupation account for three-fourths of the fatalities in the Solid Waste Collection industry. The private landfill industry, after not having any fatalities in the past two years, incurred 9 fatalities in 2015. Private material recovery facilities incurred 3 fatalities in 2015 up from zero fatalities the prior year.

Both private and public sector waste and recycling operations had 50 fatalities in 2015, up from 40 in 2014 and driven up mainly by fatalities at the landfill. The last time this number was 50 or higher was in 2008 when 54 fatalities occurred.

Nationally, across all industries tracked by BLS, including government, fatalities rose slightly (0.3%) in 2015 to 4,836. For all private industries, fatalities fell to 4,379 in 2015 from 4,386 the previous year.

NWRA, which represents private industry waste and recycling companies nationwide, has spearheaded a comprehensive industry-wide series of initiatives in concert with its member companies aimed at reducing fatalities, injuries and accidents. In March 2016, NWRA led a Safety Summit with leading safety professionals in the private waste and recycling industry, and adopted a three year strategic plan designed to reduce the rates of fatality, injuries and accidents through industry wide measurement, collaboration and process improvement.

An NWRA data task force was formed during the Summit is now engaged in the work of improving current data metrics used with the industry as part of its long term plan to reduce fatalities, injuries and accidents.

“Today’s release of BLS industry and occupational fatality data supports our urgency to improve safety performance nationwide with a special emphasis on front-line workers,” said NWRA Interim-CEO Kevin Kraushaar. “Safety is a top priority for NWRA and with that, our members are committed to sharing best practices and working together on a road map that we expect will save lives, reduce injuries and lower incident rates.”

Beginning with the 2015 reference year, final data from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) will be released in December—4 months earlier than in past years. The final 2015 CFOI data are scheduled for release on December 16, 2016. This December release will be the only release of CFOI data for 2015. A similar schedule will be followed in subsequent years. Preliminary releases, which normally appeared in August or September in past years will no longer be produced.

In 2016, NWRA initiated a series of weekly Safety Stand Downs to focus on specific causes of accidents and injuries. NWRA’s January 2016 Stand Down focused on the dangers associated with the backing of vehicles. NWRA’s May 16 – 20 Stand Down will focus on Water, Rest and Shade as the summer months approach. An NWRA analysis found that at least three fatalities were attributable to extreme heat exposure between 2012 and 2013.

Just this week, NWRA carried out the third in its ongoing national series of safety professional development events. This series is aimed at sharing knowledge, strategies and best practices with members and non-members to improve safety cultures, have participants learn from case studies and from one another while seeking to further elevate safety programs.

NWRA is the standard developing organization for ANSI standards in the waste and recycling industry. Throughout 2016, the ASC Z245 has begun the process of creating a standard on Landfill safety. The numbers released today demonstrate how the proactive efforts around the ASC Z245 are making the industry safer.

Over the past three years, NWRA and its chapters nationwide have successfully championed “Slow Down to Get Around” legislation, which is now the law in ten states and under consideration in several more. These laws require that motorists slow down when waste and recycling collection vehicles are stopped and workers are getting on and off, just as motorists are required to slow down in construction work zones, or stop for school buses, or pull over for emergency vehicles.

“NWRA is completely committed to achieving a positive and robust safety culture industry-wide,” said NWRA National Safety Director Anthony Hargis. “We’re pleased to work with our members and our partners to move the needle on safety for our workers and the communities that our industry serves.”

NWRA and its members have undertaken numerous initiatives that represent a comprehensive approach to improving safety for workers in the waste and recycling industry, including:

- Hosting safety seminars in cities nationwide for haulers, processors and other stakeholders in the waste and recycling collection process;
- Development of safety manuals for use by drivers and workers in the industry;
- Creation of the first-of-its-kind Driver Certification program for waste and recycling collection vehicle operators;
- Temporary worker safety training;
- Safety Monday — A bi-lingual poster sent each week to member companies with important practical tips to prevent accident and injury;
- Commercial vehicle safety inspection briefings and demonstrations;
- Online safety webinars and education sessions at industry conferences to promote sharing of best practices; and,
- NWRA serves as the ANSI standards-setting body covering the safe design, manufacture, maintenance and use of equipment used in the waste and recycling industry.

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ABOUT NWRA

As the leading voice of the private waste and recycling industry, NWRA is helping make our industry safer, smarter and stronger. NWRA provides leadership, advocacy, research, education and safety expertise for the waste and recycling industries. NWRA advocates at the Federal, State and Local levels on all issues of importance to our member companies as they provide safe, economically sustainable and environmentally sound services to communities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For more information about NWRA’s safety programs, visit wasterecycling.org.

Contact:

Brandon Wright

bwright@wasterecycling.org

(202) 364-3706

CONTACT US



@wasterecycling
wasterecycling.org • 202-244-4700
info@wasterecycling.org
1550 Crystal Drive, Suite 804 Arlington,
VA 22202