

PRESS RELEASE



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

Private Sector Waste and Recycling Fatalities Decrease While Fatalities in Waste and Recycling Occupation Overall Remain Fifth Highest

WASHINGTON, DC, April 21, 2016 – The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) today updated final figures for industry and occupational fatality data, for which preliminary results were released in September 2015. In its **2014 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 27 fatalities in 2014, down from 33 in 2013.

A National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) analysis of the just-released final data shows that a majority of this reduction was attributable to a decrease in fatalities in the private sector. Over the past four years, fatalities in the private sector by occupation has decreased by 28 percent (dropping from 25 in 2011 to 18 in 2014), while fatalities in the public sector nearly doubled (rising from 5 to 9.) Despite this lower number of fatalities the rate of fatalities in the occupation overall rose from 33 to 35.8 per 100,000 workers for the year. BLS also analyzes data by industry, and in the industry defined as Solid Waste Collection in 2014, 40 fatalities occurred, 27 in the private sector and 13 in the public sector. The data shows that the Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors occupation account for two-thirds of the fatalities in the Solid Waste Collection industry.

Nationally, across all industries tracked by BLS, including government, fatalities rose 5.1 percent in 2014 to 4,821. For all private industries, fatalities rose 6.9 percent to 4386.

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 data update from BLS reinforces the urgency we hold in our industry to drive meaningful improvement in safety performance nationwide, especially for front-line workers” commented Sharon H. Kneiss, president and chief executive officer of NWRA. “We have been studying best practices from other industries faced with similar challenges, such as mining, and together we and our member companies, along with other private and public sector organizations, are implementing comprehensive programs that will improve safety for our workers and the communities we serve.”

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.

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.

“We’re working toward driving a culture of safety across all of our member companies and across the industry,” commented Anthony Hargis, NWRA national director of safety. “Our members are fully engaged in sharing best practices and agreeing on the specific steps – and specific measures of progress –that will ultimately result in saved lives, fewer injuries and reduced incidents.”

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.

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.

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