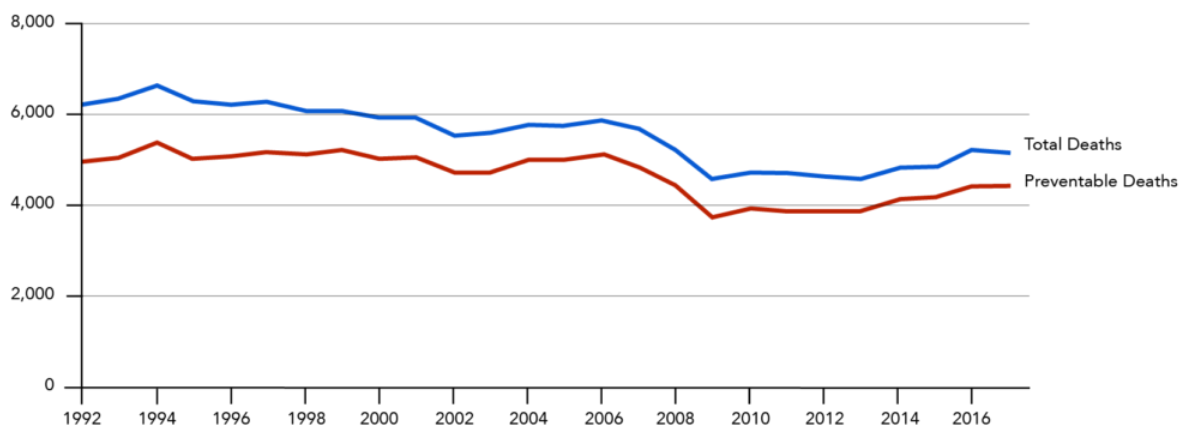


24.9: Why It Matters- Safety, Health, and Risk Management

Why learn about safety, health and risk management?

Although serious and often fatal injuries were common in the early industrial age, many of us assume that the modern workplace is a kinder—or at least safer—place. We assume that the laws passed in response to atrocities such as the Triangle Shirtwaist fire (discussed in Module 13: Union–Management Relations) and horrific workplace conditions in the meatpacking and other industries have addressed these risks and created an environment free of—at the very least, preventable—work-related injuries. As Figure 1 illustrates, that assumption would be wrong. In 2017, over 5,000 people died due to work-related-injuries in the United States. What is particularly shocking is that 86% of those fatalities were preventable. That is, 4,414 of the 5,147 deaths could have been avoided. At a global level, the International Labor Organization estimates the number of deaths due to occupational injuries and illnesses is 2,780,000 annually.^[1]

Work-related-injury deaths, United States, 1992–2017



Source: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/work-overview/work-related-fatality-trends/>

Work-related-injury deaths, United States, 1992–2017^[2]

Year	Total deaths	Preventable Deaths
1992	6,217	4,965
1993	6,331	5,034
1994	6,632	5,338
1995	6,275	5,015
1996	6,202	5,069
1997	6,238	5,160
1998	6,055	5,117
1999	6,054	5,184
2000	5,920	5,022
2001	5,915	5,042
2002	5,534	4,726
2003	5,575	4,725

Year	Total deaths	Preventable Deaths
2004	5,764	4,995
2005	5,734	4,984
2006	5,840	5,088
2007	5,657	4,829
2008	5,214	4,423
2009	4,551	3,744
2010	4,690	3,896
2011	4,692	3,901
2012	4,628	3,903
2013	4,585	3,899
2014	4,821	4,132
2015	4,836	4,190
2016	5,190	4,398
2017	5,147	4,414

The total cost of work injuries in the United States was \$161.5 billion in 2017 (see Figure 2 for the breakdown).^[3] According to Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, U.S. employers spent \$58.5 billion—over \$1 billion per week—on the most disabling nonfatal injuries and illnesses in 2018.^[4]

Work Injury Costs^[5]

Total Cost in 2017	\$161.5 billion
Cost per worker	\$1,100
Cost per death	\$1,150,000
Cost per medically consulted injury	\$39,000

Although significant, these costs are a fraction of the total cost of ineffective safety and health management. As occupational health and safety experts David Michaels and John Henshaw note in a GreenBiz article, “a strong commitment to safety and health can . . . decrease training and recruitment costs, increase worker engagement and satisfaction, increase productivity and quality and improve reputational and financial performance.”^[6]

In this module, we’ll discuss a business’s legal obligations for workplace safety and health, the enforcement process, how to improve workplace safety and risk management.

1. "ILO: Global Cost of Work-related Injuries and Deaths Totals Almost \$3 Trillion." Safety + Health Magazine. September 6, 2017. Accessed August 20, 2019. ↵
2. National Safety Council. "Work-Related Fatality Trends." Injury Facts. Accessed November 18, 2019. ↵
3. "ILO: Global Cost of Work-related Injuries and Deaths Totals Almost \$3 Trillion." ↵
4. "Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index." Liberty Mutual Insurance. February 2018. Accessed August 20, 2019. ↵
5. "Workplace Safety Index." Liberty Mutual Group. Accessed November 18, 2019. ↵
6. Michaels, David and John Henshaw. "Here's Why Worker Safety is a Sustainability Essential." Accessed August 20, 2019. ↵

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