

## NJ Labor Market Views

issue #25

# Commitment to Workplace Safety Pays off for Workers and Employers

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Helping to assure safe healthy workplaces is part of the mission of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD). Through programs like the Safety and Health Consultation Service and Occupational Safety Training Courses, LWD works with employers, workers and labor-management safety committees to promote worker health and safety on the job. (More specific information on these programs is presented later in this article).

Beyond these important initiatives to identify and correct hazardous conditions and practices, the most effective jobsite safety efforts exist where employers and workers come together to make safety a business priority.

In many New Jersey workplaces these cooperative efforts are paying dividends – for the workers and for the businesses. Safer jobsites mean less time lost to injury or illness, lower health-care and insurance costs, and greater productivity. A survey that tracks on-the-job worker safety and health measures is conducted annually by LWD's Office of Research and Information, in cooperation with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The data gathered through this survey of employers help bring the latest workplace conditions into focus. The latest survey data released by BLS and LWD (calendar year 2011) show that in New Jersey a commitment



to workplace safety and health has been embraced in a broad array of job sites.

### Private Sector Worksites

According to the 2011 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, private sector workplaces saw the number of injuries and illnesses decline by 5,800 from the 2010 level to 76,700 in 2011.

The overall 2011 private sector incidence rate of 3.0 incidences per in 100 workers continues its downward trend and consistently has been lower than the national rate of 3.5 in both 2011 and 2010.

The private sector incidence rate for cases involving full days away from work beyond the day of the incident was 1.1 cases per 100 workers in 2011, equal to the 2011 national rate.

The data also show that three of New Jersey's large industry sectors saw decreased incidence rates for lost-workday cases over the last few years. These sectors include manufacturing which saw a decline from a 1.7 rate in 2003 to 1.3 in 2011. In wholesale trade the 2011 rate of 1.1 fell well below the 2.0 incidence rate in 2005, while in retail trade the rate dropped from 2.1 in 2003 to 1.2 in 2011.

In the transportation and warehousing sector, which annually has recorded the highest injury and illness incidence rate most years over the past decade, the 2011 incidence rate of 5.3 total cases was 26 percent lower than the 7.2 cases recorded in 2007.

**According to the 2011 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, the number of injuries and illnesses declined in both the private and public sectors**

Scan to visit the Office of Research and Information online:

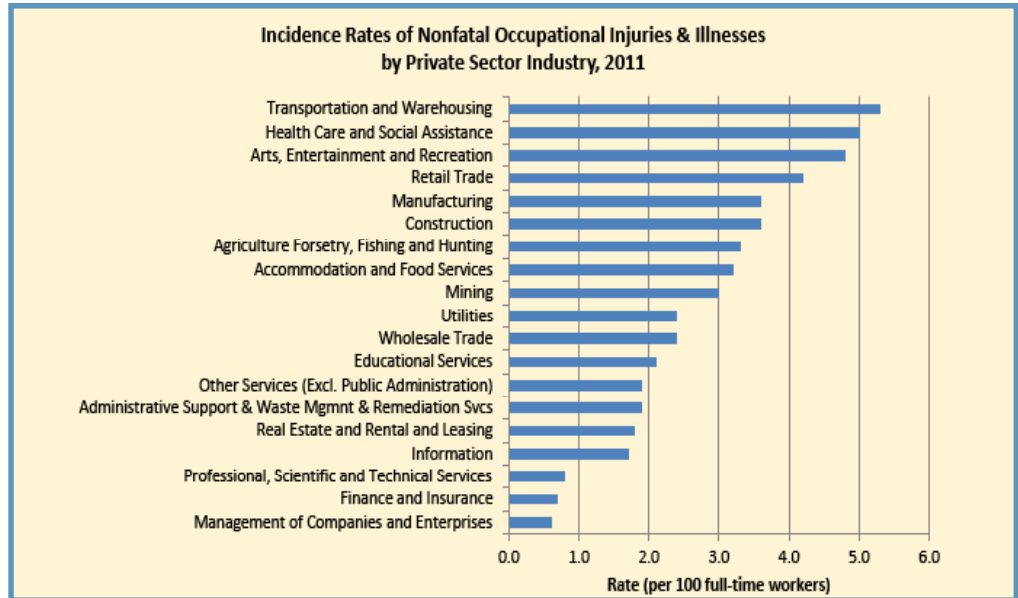


## Public Sector

Survey takers note a significant difference in the occupational mix for public sector workers when compared with private sector workers. For example, many public sector workers are engaged in higher-risk activities, such as police work, guarding correctional institutions, serving as paid and volunteer fire fighters, as well as caring for patients in state psychiatric hospitals and residential care facilities. These tasks can result in overall higher incidence rates for the public sector workforce.

The survey indicates that in 2011, New Jersey public sector workers at all levels of government experienced 27,900 work-related injuries and illnesses. The incidence rate for New Jersey's public sector was 7.0 cases per 100 workers in 2011 – a decrease of 21 percent from the 2003 rate of 8.9 cases.

In all, four of the six industry sectors within **state** government showed a decrease in total case incidence rates from 2010 to 2011.

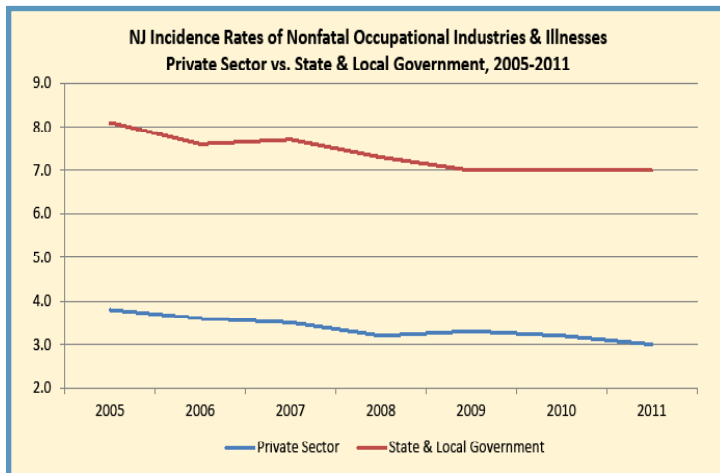


New Jersey's **state** government workforce experienced 1,000 fewer recordable cases in 2011 than in 2010. Of the 5,500 total cases, 3,000 resulted in days away from work — a state government incidence rate for cases involving days away from work of 2.7 cases per 100 full-time workers.

The overall 2011 state government incidence rate continued a trend toward fewer incidents, dropping from a rate of 6.5 in 2008, to 6.0 in 2009 and 5.8 in 2010 to a 2011 rate of 5.0 incidents per 100 workers. This is the lowest incidence rate recorded for New Jersey's state government sector since 1993, when public sector data was first collected as part of the BLS cooperative program.

*2011 had the lowest injury/illness rate for NJ state government since 1993*

Although the 9.6 incidence rate for the health care and social assistance industry sector was the highest in state government, that rate was well down from the 10.9 rate in 2010 and generally has been declining since 2005 when the rate



was 14.3. The total cases rate has also declined dramatically in state correctional institutions, from 13.3 in 2005 to 6.4 in 2011.

With a total of 22,400 injury and illness cases in 2011, **local** government had an incidence rate of 7.8 cases per 100 workers. The local government sector includes county and municipal workers as well as volunteer and paid firefighters.

Within local government, the industry sector of public administration had a 2011 incidence rate of 9.7 cases per 100 workers. Many jobs in this sector have higher risks for work-related injuries and illnesses because the sector includes police protection, fire protection (paid and volunteer), county correctional institutions, and other municipal and county government operations.

Within the local government public administration industry sector:

- The rate for workers in fire protection was 12.7 cases in 2011, statistically unchanged for several years.
- For jobs in county correctional institutions the rate was 12.6 cases in 2011, down from 14.6 in 2008.
- The Police protection rate of 12.3 cases in 2011 was up from 11.0 in 2010.

## Creating Safe Worksites

There are a number of LWD programs and initiatives available to employers to help promote workplace safety and health and to create a cooperative worker-management approach to maintaining a safe work environment. These include no-fee training programs as well as the free Safety and Health Consultation Program.

## Safety Training Courses

During 2012, the Department's Division of Public Safety and Occupational Safety and Health conducted more than 360 training sessions for New Jersey's public and private sector employers. The Division offers a series of no-fee occupational safety training courses to educate workers and employers in the safest practices and procedures for basic and specific jobs and operations.

Making use of these courses is convenient because the Department's trainers will provide the training classes right at an employer's worksite. In addition, many courses can be customized to address specific challenges within specific workplaces.

These free courses are intended not only to teach workers how to perform a job in the safest manner, they also seek to educate workers and employers in how to work together to maintain a safe work environment. The underlying goals of the training programs are to demonstrate safe work practices, develop awareness of inherent dangers and to help employers and employees to develop workplaces that are free of recognizable safety hazards and which also comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or Public Employees' Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) standards. Refresher courses are also available and as new occupational safety and health standards are adopted, the Division of Public Safety and Occupational Safety and Health develops seminars and training programs to help employers and

*LWD offers free occupational safety training courses to teach employers and employees how to maintain a safe work environment free of recognizable safety hazards and complies with OSHA or PEOSH standards*

During 2012, LWD safety and health programs helped thousands of workers and hundreds of employers identify and address worksite hazards and develop safer work environments.

### **Safety Consultation Program**

<u>Consultations</u>	<u>Hazards Identified</u>
Private Sector: 447	Private Sector: 1,208
Public Sector: 54	Public Sector: 271

### **Safety Training Programs**

<u>Training Sessions</u>	<u>Workers Trained</u>
Private Sector: 366	Private Sector: 4,259
Public Sector: 277	Public Sector: 4,092

employees understand the requirements of the new standards.

These free courses cover a wide range of subjects and deal with a variety of worksite activities. Some basic training is covered in courses such as “Slips, Trips and Falls” and “Material Handling, Back Safety and Lifting Techniques.” A “Grounds Maintenance,” course gives employees an awareness of hazards associated with the equipment and practices in maintaining grounds and the “Ladder Safety” course teaches inspection, selection and placement for the safe use of ladders.

Other available courses include training specifically for situations such as working in confined spaces; safety practices for employees working with electrical systems; safe excavating and trenching, and “Hand and Portable Power Tool Safety.”

Management and supervisor courses include “The Supervisor and Safety,” and “OSHA Record Keeping.” Public sector employers also can take advantage of the “Introduction to the Public Employees’ Occupational Safety and Health Act.”

## Safety and Health Consultation Program

More than 500 employers, last year, used LWD’s Occupational Safety and Health Consultation Program to help identify and remove hazards, lower their accident rates, reduce insurance costs and improve productivity.

The Safety Consultation program offers employers a free consultation to assess worksite safety and health management systems. The consultation process will identify potential hazards to help employers prevent accidents, illnesses, injuries and fatalities. The consultation is offered at no charge to public and private sector New Jersey employ-

ers and is independent of PEOSH and OSHA enforcement.

During a consultation, a company representative accompanies the consultant and employee representatives are also encouraged to be included in the process. Consultants do not issue citations or penalties for violations. However, all serious hazards identified must be corrected within a specified time frame.

The program is designed to develop an awareness and commitment by everyone in the workplace to building a workplace culture of safe practices and procedures. In addition to protecting workers and saving employers money by reducing workers’ compensation coverage costs, the SHARP (Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program), gives employers the opportunity to qualify for exemption from routine OSHA enforcement inspections.

For more information on safety training courses and the Consultation Service, email the Division of Public Safety and Occupational Safety and Health at: [Safety&health\\_training@dol.state.nj.us](mailto:Safety&health_training@dol.state.nj.us)

## Online Resources:

NJ Workplace Safety Data: [http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/content/occsaf\\_heavy\\_index.html](http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/content/occsaf_heavy_index.html)

US Workplace Safety Data: <http://www.BLS.gov/iif/>

NJ Safety Training and Consultation Service: [http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lse/safetyhealth\\_index.html](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lse/safetyhealth_index.html)

**LWD’s occupational safety and health consultation program is offered at no charge, and is independent of PEOSH and OSHA enforcement**

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