

100 Years of Killing Workers International Day of Mourning

Alberta celebrates its 100th birthday on September 1, 2005. In this centennial year, the Alberta Federation of Labour was interested in examining the history of worker safety in the province.

There is no single reliable source for fatality and accident statistics for the early years of the province. The AFL conducted archival research to extract official government records of “fatal accidents” in the early years.

The statistics likely under-represent the number of workplace fatalities. Early records only include traumatic incidents and exclude any occupational disease. In more recent years, the statistics reflect the number of fatalities “accepted” by WCB, again excluding many disease-related deaths. Also, since 1919, farm fatalities have been excluded from the statistics (the AFL was unable to find statistics for farm fatalities between 1919 and 1985).

Workplace Fatality Facts

- First worker killed after Alberta became a province: *October 9, 1905*
Miner at Bankhead Mine (near Banff), clothes caught in mine shafting
- Number of officially recorded workplace fatalities (1905-2004) *9,219*
- The number of workers killed equals the populations of: *Hinton or High River*
- Number of workers killed in 1905: *20*
- Highest number of fatalities in one year: *221 in 1914*
(this includes 189 miners killed in the Hillcrest Mine Disaster)
- Second highest in one year: *169 in 1980 & 1982*
- Number of workers killed 1905-1954 *3,233*
- Number of workers killed 1955-2004 *5,986*
- Number of Farm Fatalities 1985-2004 (not included in statistics): *352*
- Number of Farm Fatalities in 2004: *16*
- Number of Farm Child Fatalities in 2004: *5*
- Number of years when more than 100 workers were killed: *49*
- Highest number of fatalities in last 20 years: *132 in 1986*
- Second highest in last 20 years: *127 in 2003*
- Number of workers killed in 2004: *124*

Sources: 1905-1918, Canada Labour Gazette, Government of Canada; 1919-2004, Alberta Workers' Compensation Board; Farm Fatalities: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Note: A table showing the number of fatalities for every year since 1905 is available from the AFL upon request.

Fatality Rates by Population

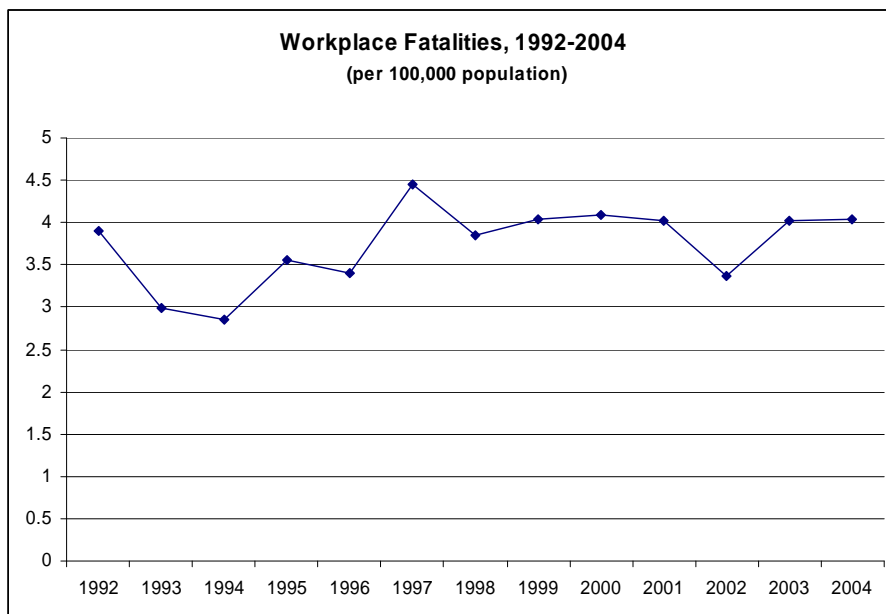
If we compare the number of workplace fatalities to Alberta's population, we find that for much of Alberta's history, the rate slowly dropped. However during the past 15 years, we have stalled. This period coincides with the government of Ralph Klein, and was a period of cutbacks, reduction of enforcement and lack of prosecutions.

Fatality rates can be seen as a rough measurement of how well the province is doing at preventing workplace death. The Fatality Rate is calculated by dividing the number of deaths by Alberta's population and then multiplying by 100,000.

Workplace Fatality Rate by Population

Year	Worker Fatalities (per 100,000 population)
1906	13.5
1921	9.3
1941	12.4
1961	8.0
1981	7.3
1991	3.4
1996	3.4
2000	4.1
2004	4.0

Sources: Population: 1906-1991, Statistics Canada Census; 1996-2004, Government of Alberta Fatalities: 1906, Labour Gazette; 1921-2004, Alberta WCB



Sources: Government of Alberta, Alberta WCB

Workplace Fatalities, Alberta 1905-2004

Year	Fatalities
1905	20
1906	25
1907	48
1908	52
1909	39
1910	81
1911	49
1912	66
1913	73
1914	221
1915	28
1916	27
1917	15
1918	26
1919	43
1920	81
1921	55
1922	66
1923	58
1924	59
1925	46
1926	58
1927	59
1928	74
1929	72
1930	53
1931	35
1932	33
1933	24
1934	39
1935	61
1936	43
1937	45
1938	59

Year	Fatalities
1939	41
1940	58
1941	99
1942	63
1943	78
1944	55
1945	80
1946	67
1947	88
1948	105
1949	116
1950	121
1951	111
1952	92
1953	124
1954	102
1955	119
1956	131
1957	117
1958	111
1959	117
1960	116
1961	107
1962	131
1963	106
1964	123
1965	132
1966	126
1967	129
1968	118
1969	139
1970	132
1971	137
1972	104

Year	Fatalities
1973	122
1974	141
1975	124
1976	125
1977	141
1978	138
1979	156
1980	169
1981	161
1982	169
1983	95
1984	96
1985	123
1986	132
1987	101
1988	124
1989	107
1990	120
1991	86
1992	99
1993	77
1994	74
1995	93
1996	91
1997	120
1998	105
1999	114
2000	118
2001	118
2002	101
2003	127
2004	124
Total	9219

Sources: 1905-1918, Canadian Labour Gazette (Government of Canada), volumes 5-19. 1919-2004, Alberta Workers' Compensation Board