

Caution needed when operating machinery in the workplace

Stephen Watkins, Director of Corporate Services at the Injuries Board, highlights the incidence of serious accidents when operating machinery in Irish workplaces. The Injuries Board is the state body that handles personal injury claims.



The continuing occurrence of serious accidents when operating machinery in workplaces around the country is a cause for concern according to an Injuries Board analysis of claims. Last year in Ireland, almost 10% of all workplace claims assessed by the Board involved machinery/equipment, with 80 people receiving compensation totalling €3.1 million for their injuries. The average compensation award for these injuries was €39,472, with claimants suffering crush injuries, fractures, lacerations and severed digits. In severe cases amputations were required and tragically one accident resulted in a fatality.

When operating machinery, it is very important to always be alert to potential dangers, as even momentary lapses in concentration can lead to serious and otherwise preventable accidents.

The nature of accidents in the workplace involving machinery varies widely and includes: hands, fingers or feet getting caught or crushed in machines, conveyor belts

or blades; lacerations when using saws, drills, mixers and steel cutters; and heavy machinery falling on workers. The resulting injuries can have a considerable impact on those involved. At the very worst, they can do serious, irreversible and lasting damage, which can involve long periods of rehabilitation and a permanent disability.

The last few years have seen a welcome decline in the number of awards for accidents in Irish workplaces, but in spite of this, it's important to re-emphasise the need for vigilance with regard to workplace safety and complete adherence to health and safety laws.

Worryingly, some accidents in the workplace were caused by not wearing essential safety equipment or by defective equipment/machinery. Therefore, employers have an important role to play in ensuring that all health and safety regulations are fully met, and that awareness of workplace safety procedures is actively promoted, in the office, on the factory floor or on a production line.

By law, personal injury claims must be made through the Injuries Board, unless settled directly between the parties. There is no requirement to use a solicitor/intermediary as the Board accepts direct applications. Intending claimants are advised to carry out some basic research to avoid committing to a service and cost they might not need.

The claims process involves the assessment of compensation based on medical reports provided as well as establishing the financial loss incurred as a result of absence from work or incurring of medical treatment costs.

The Injuries Board can be contacted by telephoning our Lo-Call helpline 1890 829 121 between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, by logging on to www.injuriesboard.ie or by writing to us at InjuriesBoard.ie, P.O. Box 8, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. You can also download the Injuries Board smartphone app through the App Store and on Google Play, or follow us on Twitter @injuriesboard

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