

# Commitment to workplace safety needed

**Stephen Watkins, Director of Corporate Services at the Injuries Board, discusses the incidence of workplace accidents and fatalities in Ireland and urges greater commitment to workplace safety. The Injuries Board is the state body that handles personal injury claims.**



**A**fter years of rising unemployment and the closure of many factories, offices and businesses around the country, there is a sense that the worst is behind us as the economy begins to grow again and people re-join the workforce. However, as more people join the workforce, it is important that safety at work is at the forefront of all our minds.

According to the Health and Safety Authority, 46 people were killed in work-related accidents during 2013. Earlier this month, the Injuries Board reported that it had awarded total compensation of €24m for 826 awards for workplace accidents in 2013, compared to €22m compensation for 807 awards in 2012. Behind these statistics lie the tragic personal stories of those affected by these accidents.

It is clear from the level of fatalities and the level of accidents resulting in personal injury claims, that Irish workplaces can be dangerous places. Health and safety procedures should be given close and careful attention. While cutting corners in terms of safety might seem to save much needed time and money, this can result in

significant injuries to employees and others, involving fractured limbs, crush injuries, loss of limbs, and in some cases, even death.

Some occupations are more dangerous than others – with farming at the top of the list. While the Injuries Board does not receive many claims for injuries resulting from farming accidents, as most farmers are their own employers, the high level of farming accidents is concerning. The construction industry also records a high level of fatalities and accidents, and with activity in the industry increasing again, a renewed focus on safety is vital. We urge people working in these industries to heed the safety advice provided by organisations such as the Irish Farmers Association, the Construction Industry Federation and the Health and Safety Authority. As more people re-enter the workforce, those that drive for a living or commute long distances should also take particular care as many accidents are related to driving to, or for, work.

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, or call us directly in the first instance, to avoid committing to a service and cost they might not need.

The assessment of compensation is based on the 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 is fully self-financing, with no reliance on the State for any funding.

The Injuries Board can be contacted by telephoning the Lo-Call helpline 1890 829 121 between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, by logging on to [www.injuriesboard.ie](http://www.injuriesboard.ie) or by post at InjuriesBoard.ie, P.O. Box 8, Clonakilty, Co Cork. You can also download the Injuries Board smartphone app or follow us on Twitter @injuriesboard

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