

New Year, New Focus on Safety in the Workplace

*In welcoming the New Year, **Stephen Watkins, Director of Corporate Services at the Injuries Board**, suggests that businesses should focus on safety in 2016. The Injuries Board is the state body that handles personal injury claims.*



After the festive season, people all around the country are making resolutions of all kinds; to improve their health, financial security and general wellbeing. Many people spend a large proportion of their time at work, and this combined with an increase in workplace accidents over the last few years, makes it essential that a new focus is put on safety in the workplace this year.

The Injuries Board is the independent state body that makes awards for compensation arising from motor, public and employer liability claims. The Board's most recent analysis of compensation for employer liability (EL) personal injury claims showed that in 2014, €30million was awarded to 941 claimants for workplace accidents. This is an increase on the 826 awards made the previous year which totalled €24million, and represents a significant cost to employers, not to mention the impact on employees who have accidents, some of which can be devastating and life changing.

The Health & Safety Authority recently focused on construction activity, which is increasing again around the country. They report that from 2010 to the end of 2014, 39 people lost their lives in construction-related activity, and in spite of the recession, the fatality rate for the sector increased from 4.1

deaths per 100,000 workers in 2010 to 9.4 in 2013. This trend is reflected across many sectors however, so to avoid the business cost and the human impact of unnecessary workplace accidents, the Injuries Board recommends that businesses follow the advice offered by those involved in accident prevention including:

- Ensure staff are fully informed of the health and safety requirements in the workplace;
- Hold regular briefings to keep health and safety to the front of peoples' minds;
- Encourage feedback from staff on how safety can be promoted at work;
- Ensure all staff always wear the appropriate protective equipment provided;
- Ensure that routine maintenance is carried out on all workplace equipment; and ensure that staff are fully trained in its safe use;
- Keep the workplace clean and tidy and free of clutter;
- Look for ways to keep stress levels down in the workplace.

Accident victims who intend making a personal injury claim must do so through the Injuries Board, unless the case is settled directly with the other party. Claimants can choose to deal directly with the Board or make their claim through a solicitor/intermediary. Intending claimants are advised to carry out some basic research if choosing a solicitor/intermediary, or call the Injuries Board directly in the first instance, to avoid committing to a service and cost they might not need.

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 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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