Animal Processing Safety Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. Many injuries go unreported in the meat-processing industry. In general, workers are afraid to report injuries out of fear of losing their job. Many corporations pay supervisors an annual bonus for minimizing the number of worker comp claims at their facility.
2. Slaughtering animals and processing their flesh is an inherently dangerous industry.
3. Workers in the animal slaughtering and processing industry have higher incidence rates of injury or illness than the overall average for private industry workers.
4. The GAO found several situations that may keep reported numbers from packing plants lower than reality.
    - Sanitary workers who clean machinery in meat plants have suffered amputated limbs and severed fingers. Some have died on the job. But their cases are not always counted with meat and poultry industry data because many work for third-party contractors.
    - Medical staff at on-site clinics have encouraged workers to return to the line without seeing a doctor for pain.

STATS

- In 2017, 4,910 cases of injury and illness involving days away from work occurred in the animal slaughtering and processing industry. In most of these cases (69 %), the workers were men.
    - In 4,910 of the cases, the worker missed 1 or more days away from work, 37 % of these cases involved overexertion and bodily reaction. Another 13,300 cases involved job transfer or worker restriction.
    - In 2017, 54 % of the job transfer or restriction cases involved overexertion and bodily reaction. The rate of total recordable cases per 100 full-time workers was 5.4, higher than the rate for all private industry (3.0) and manufacturing (3.8).
    - In addition, 73 workers were fatally injured in this industry; 34 % of these fatal injuries were transportation incidents.
- Three occupations that accounted for approximately 41 % of days-away-from-work cases in this industry were meat, poultry, and fish cutters and

trimmers (18 %); laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand (14 %); and slaughterers and meat packers (9 percent).

- In 39 % of the cases among **meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers**, the event or exposure was repetitive motions involving microtasks.
- The nature of injury was sprains, strains, and tears in 27 % of the cases and carpal tunnel syndrome in 14 %.
- **For slaughterers and meat packers**, the nature of injury was sprains, strains, or tears in 23 percent of the cases. Cuts, lacerations made up 14 % of the cases, as did fractures.