

## Week of January 3, 2011 – Workplace Accident Statistics and Coping with the Post-Holiday Blues

The last topic for 2010 was a message about drunk driving statistics. We begin 2011 focusing on the trend of occupational accident statistics. The good news is that there are fewer workplace injuries and illnesses than there used to be. The bad news is that there are still too many.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses among private industry employers declined in 2009 (the most recent year for which statistics are available) to a rate of 3.6 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers, down from a total case rate of 3.9 in 2008.

Injuries and illnesses fell by about 400,000 overall in 2009, but they still amounted to:

- 275,00 reported injuries and illnesses a month;
- 63,462 a week; and
- Over 9,000 a day.

Key findings from BLS's 2009 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses include the following:

- Although incidence rates for injuries and illnesses in general declined significantly in 2009, the rate of lost workdays remained relatively unchanged from the previous year.
- The manufacturing industry sector reported the largest year-to-year decline in injuries and illnesses since 2003—falling by 23 percent (161,100 cases) from 2008 to 2009, lowering the incidence rate by 0.7 cases to 4.3 cases per 100 workers. The drop in cases reported in this sector represents nearly 39 percent of the total private industry decline in injuries and illnesses in 2009.
- The construction industry sector reported 71,700 fewer cases in 2009, compared to 2008—a 22 percent decline, lowering the incidence rate by 0.4 cases to 4.3 cases per 100 workers. The decline in reported cases among the manufacturing and construction industry sectors together represents nearly 56 percent of the total private industry decline in injuries and illnesses in 2009.
- The incidence rate of injuries only among private industry workers fell from 3.7 to 3.4 cases per 100 workers between 2008 and 2009, resulting from an 11 percent drop in the number of injury cases.
- Both the incidence rate and the number of illness cases declined significantly in 2009, compared to 2008—led by a decline among the skin diseases category which accounted for nearly 47 percent of the decline in illness cases among private industry establishments.
- Slightly more than one-half of the 3.3 million private industry injury and illness cases reported nationally in 2009 were of a more serious nature that involved days away from work, job transfer, or restriction (commonly referred to as DART cases). These occurred at a rate of 1.8 cases per 100 workers, declining from 2.0 cases in 2008.

### A message about post holiday blues

“Holiday blues” or “holiday depression” are terms commonly used to refer to mental distress occurring during the winter festivals. The term “blues” usually describes mild mental distress, which is common when dealing with life problems. The term “depression” refers to an illness of persistent sadness, and is not a normal reaction to the holidays.

The holiday season is known for the stressors that come with it, such as relationship concerns, financial problems and reflection on previous holidays. For some, the distress will lift when the holidays end, whereas others may continue to feel unhappy and/or stressed. Some may have enjoyed the holiday season, feeling low when it’s over.

Possible triggers or reasons for post-holiday mental distress include:

- Loss, following enjoyment of the season and the departing of loved ones.
- Concern, following stressors of the season and possible ramifications of relationship conflicts.
- Weight gain and lack of energy from overindulgence of festive food and drink.
- Financial concerns, such as debt, as a result of overspending.
- New Year's resolutions that are unrealistic.

Depression symptoms include:

- Persistent feelings of low mood
- Lack of enjoyment or interest in activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tiredness
- Sleeping problems
- Changes in appetite

Coping strategies include:

- Making healthy choices – choosing healthier foods and getting some exercise will likely play a role in improving mood and energy levels. For those wishing to lose holiday weight, it is wise to stay away from fad diets – the safest and most effective way to lose weight is to do it gradually.
- Making realistic resolutions – resolutions are by no means mandatory, but for those who do wish to make them, it's important that the goals are achievable. Using the above example of weight loss, a goal to lose 1lb a week is realistic. A goal to lose 7lbs a week isn't!
- Seeking financial advice – this is important for those who have racked up debt from holiday expenses. Ignoring debt will only make matters worse, and many lenders are amenable to arranging manageable repayment plans.
- Looking at previous patterns – if someone has spent the last three Januaries upset about holiday debts or holiday overindulgence, they should think carefully about these behaviors the next time round. In most cases, these sorts of problems are avoidable, with a bit of work.

When unpleasant post-holiday feelings become persistent and difficult to deal with, it is wise to consult a qualified physician. This is partly because depression can result from some physical illnesses, and is a side-effect of some medications. Physicians will also advise on safe weight loss and exercise.

***PEOPLE WHO WORK TOGETHER WILL WIN, WHETHER IT BE AGAINST  
COMPLEX FOOTBALL DEFENSES, OR THE PROBLEMS OF MODERN SOCIETY.***

*Vince Lombardi*

*Courtesy of Robert Brounstein, Corporate Director Safety and Health with  
TerranearPMC*