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Included in this issue of the Journal is a hazard alert on the causes of 249 worker fatalities in the construction industry (1995 – 2001).

It graphically illustrates the most common causes of fatalities in the construction industry. The proportion of work-related deaths has been changing with single-incident deaths decreasing and work-related disease deaths increasing.

There have been eighty-eight deaths from asbestosis/ mesothelioma since 1995. These diseases usually take fifteen years or more to develop after exposure to asbestos. A shipbuilder was exposed to asbestos, as was a sheet-metal worker. Both died from asbestosis. A pipefitter died from mesothelioma after exposure to asbestos.

Falling from elevation, a roof or a scaffold took 41 lives. The proper use of fall protection could have reduced this number. Not using fall protection equipment properly continues to be the most common infraction that results in a penalty from the Board.

The Remembering Lost Lives report issued in April of this year was a follow-up to the 1999 ten-year review of fatalities from 1989-98. The fatality pyramid below shows the relationship between fatalities, injuries and unsafe actions.



Prevention is the key to reducing fatalities. Both employers and their workers have responsibilities to themselves, their families and their communities to develop, implement and use on a daily basis an effective health and safety program. A joint health and safety committee that has the active support of management can create written safe work procedures and emergency response procedures and ensure that there is adequate training instruction and supervision of workers.

The Board does have programs in place to assist workers and their families as well as their employers if they are involved in a fatality. The Critical Incident Response Program is being piloted at work sites and was outlined here in August. Grief counseling is made available to the families of deceased workers.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS

I would like to include your ideas and questions in future columns. Send your ideas for future columns to me at dnelson@wcb.bc.ca or call me at (604) 231-8631 or toll free in B.C. at 1 888 621-7233.

