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Labor Day Prompts Spotlight on Worker Safety

Average of 264 Minnesota workers suffer job-related injury or illness each day

ST. PAUL (September 9, 2016) – While the Labor Day weekend marks the traditional end of summer for most, it also provides an opportunity to focus on the safety and health of Minnesota workers.

“Safety where you work is not something we should take for granted,” said Paul Aasen, president of the Minnesota Safety Council. “On an average day, 264 workers are injured or get ill at work, 59 are hospitalized and every six days, a worker dies. This is serious. We urge everyone to take the time to be safe.”

To create greater awareness of occupational hazards, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the safety council have created a workplace safety dashboard, spotlighting a number of key indicators related to worker safety and health.

“In the past decade, Minnesota has seen the number of work-related injuries and illnesses fall from 124,900 in 2004 to 96,300 in 2014; a 23 percent decrease,” said Ken Peterson, DLI commissioner. “To continue this positive trend, we need to build safer worksites so more workers go home healthy each night.”

Among the dashboard highlights:

- More than one in three fatal workplace injuries involve driving or operating a vehicle (2011-2014).
- Agriculture remains one of the most dangerous industries in Minnesota: 30 percent of fatal work injuries from 2011-2014 were among people working in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector, particularly in crop production. On average each day, seven farm workers are injured seriously enough to require medical attention.
- On average, five new cases of workers with elevated blood levels are reported every week.
- The total cost of Minnesota’s workers’ compensation system in 2014 was an estimated \$1.66 billion.

“Our health is not only greatly influenced by where we live but also by where we work,” said Minnesota Health Commissioner Dr. Ed Ehlinger. “While the implementation of labor laws and occupational health standards have greatly improved the well-being of our workforce, continued efforts are necessary to monitor the health and safety of our workers and ensure that all workers have a safe and healthy workplace.”

The dashboard, “Minnesota Workplace Safety, 2016” is available at www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/WorkplaceSafetyDashboard.pdf

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NOTES TO EDITOR: For more Minnesota workplace injury and illness data, see:

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/RS/StatWSH.asp> (non-fatal), <http://www.dli.mn.gov/RS/StatFatal.asp> (fatal)

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/RS/StatWC.asp> (workers’ comp),

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/RS/WcSystemReport.asp> (workers’ comp system annual report) and

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/occhealth/indicators/index.html> (occupational safety and health indicators)

The Minnesota Safety Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preventing injuries on the road, at work, at home, and in the community. For more information, see www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry oversees the state's programs for apprenticeship, construction codes and licensing, occupational safety and health, wage and hour standards, and workers' compensation. Visit them online at www.dli.mn.gov.

The Minnesota Department of Health's mission is to protect, maintain and improve the health of *all* Minnesotans. Visit www.health.state.mn.us for more information.