

Injuries Board pays out €25m to 1,000 workers

by **Fiachra Ó Cionnaith**

A HUGE €25 million was paid out in compensation by the Injuries Board to almost 1,000 workers involved in workplace accidents last year.

The figure is almost twice the 2005 total award of €16.3m, but is significantly less than the €115.3m handed out in 2006.

According to the injuries board, the average compensation award last year was €26,038. Among the highest awards paid out during the 12-month period were:

- €412,515 for a labourer injured as a direct result of defective machinery.
- €268,516 for a slip/fall on work premises.
- €197,850 for a worker who fell from a height.
- €163,220 for an individual struck by machinery on a building site.

According to the website injuriesboard.ie, during the course of 2007 men were more prone to serious accidents at work than women.

- The average award:
- For falls (31% of injuries) was €27,293.
 - For individuals struck by machinery (20% of injuries) was €25,701.
 - For cuts or burns inflicted through work (17%) was €19,774.
 - For injuries caused by lifting equipment (11%) was €25,770.
 - For accidents caused by defective equipment (9%) was €31,472.
 - For machine-related

injuries (7%) was €31,034.

■ For other claims as a result of work-related injuries (5%) €24,257.

Half of all awards were for less than €20,000, with one in 10 successful claims resulting in a payout in excess of €50,000.

Reacting to the figures, Health and Safety Authority chief executive Martin O'Halloran warned that employers may be tempted to cut costs in relation to the safety, health and welfare of employees.

"Apart from the legal and moral duties all employers have, the figures illustrate that such an approach is not a wise one," he said. "Smart employers know it pays to invest in health and safety."

Tony's story

Tony* is an electrician in his early twenties. He fell from a ladder while at work, sustaining facial and dental injuries and scarring, and was unable to work for several months.

The Injuries Board assessed Tony's case and awarded him general damages of €30,000 and special damages of €52,000, which will be used to pay for future dental treatment.

Tony's case was resolved within eight-and-a-half months, including the payment award made to him.

Before the Injuries Board was introduced in 2004, the group says it would have taken three years to resolve Tony's case.

*Not his real name

Chris's story

Chris* is in his mid-20s and works in a meat factory.

In work last year, he fell from a height while opening a defective door in the factory.

Although he made a full recovery from a soft tissue injury and significant cuts to his back, the Injuries Board awarded Chris €10,000 in compensation.

In all, the case took just six months before a compensation payout could be made.

*Not his real name