

Workplace accidents cost €25m last year

SOME €25 million was paid out in compensation for workplace accidents last year, according to the body that processes claims for personal injuries.

The most serious injuries at work arise from accidents involving machinery and defective equipment, an analysis of almost 1,000 accidents by Injuries-Board.ie shows.

Men accounted for 70 per cent of compensation awards made last year, and tend to suffer more serious injuries than women. Their average awards were also 25 per cent higher than for women.

In 2007, the average compensation award for a workplace accident was €26,038. Half of all awards were for less than €20,000 and over 90 per cent were for less than €50,000.

Labourers in a variety of sectors accounted for almost one-third of all awards, while trade workers in building and mining, and drivers and mobile plant operators account for a further one-in-six awards.

The highest single award for a workplace accident, for over €412,000, involved defective machinery. Another worker was awarded €268,000 for a slip and fall, while €198,000 was awarded when machinery fell from a height.

Commenting on the figures, Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the Health and Safety Authority, warned firms against cutting safety costs because of difficult economic times. "Apart from the legal and moral duties all employers have, the figures illustrate that such an approach is not a wise one. Smart employers know that it pays to invest in health and safety."

Falls accounted for one-third of awards, while another 20 per cent arose when employees were struck by an object.

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