

Women win more claims for injury in public places

■ More than 70% of awards are made to women

by Jennifer Hough

TWICE as many women as men have successfully sued for injuries suffered in a public place, figures reveal.

Out of 2,860 awards against businesses, state agencies and local authorities more than 70% were made to women.

Slips, trips, falls and other injuries cost private businesses and the Government €65 million in compensation pay-outs over two years, figures from the Injuries Board have revealed.

Compiled in detail for the first time, the report shows that 1,368 awards for public liability claims were made in 2007, and 1,491 in 2008.

Slips, trips and falls account for almost 70% of personal injuries in public places such as shops, pubs and cinemas. Accidents in privately owned establishments accounted for 56% of public liability mishaps, with almost one in four occurring in a retail outlet, one in five (19%) in a pub/nightclub or restaurant, and 13% in leisure facilities such as sports clubs and cinemas.

More than a quarter of awards were made against local authorities.

Of the 2,860 people who made successful claims, 55% received less than €20,000, while 32% were paid between €20,000 and €38,000 for their injuries.

Residents of Dublin were

32% more likely to receive an award for public liability, while Munster residents were 10% more likely to do so, based on national average figures.

Head of the Injuries Board, Patricia Byron, said companies should not be tempted to scale back on safety measures for financial reasons.

"During these tough economic times, some companies and organisations who admit the public to their facilities may be tempted to cut their investment in health and safety. That kind of approach can backfire, particularly, if you operate in a very competitive and accident-prone sphere such as retail."

Other causes for people seeking payment included being struck by a falling or flying object (11%), being injured by machinery (5%), burns/scalding (2%) and food poisoning (1%).

Most common injuries were sprains (40%) bruising (32%), fractures (29%) and lacerations (25%).

Ms Byron said it was timely for public and private sector organisations alike to review the measures they have in place to prevent accidents across retail, hospitality, leisure and public spaces.

"Accident prevention is always important and ensuring your customers enjoy a safe environment can save money in the long run. Consumers must also

take responsibility for accident prevention and be vigilant to the risks they face."

Case study

WHILE out shopping one morning, Theresa, a retired lady in her 60s, tripped over an uneven footpath and fell heavily.

X-rays revealed that she had broken her elbow in two places.

Theresa suffered nerve damage complications and, unfortunately, will not make a full recovery from her injuries and will not recover full movement of her dominant arm.

This has had an adverse affect on her home and social life.

Theresa submitted a compensation claim through InjuriesBoard.ie and her claim was dealt with within the nine-month time frame.

In light of the severity of her injuries, the board awarded Theresa €70,000 in general damages for her pain and suffering.