

The 'claims surge' that never arrived

FEARS that the recession would lead to a surge in personal injury claims have not materialised –yet.

Official figures show there was no significant increase in payouts during the first six months of the year, despite predictions to the contrary.

Some €105million was doled out to 4,400 injured parties up until the end of June- around a third of all claims received by the board. The remainder were settled or went on to be pursued by the courts.

Experts had feared that the recession would have fuelled compensation cases but this was not so, according to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board – an independent government body which assesses the amount of compensation due to someone who has suffered a personal injury.

Spokesman Gerry Naughton said “The anecdotal view is that the claims will peak during a recession but we are not seeing a surge of claims. Insurance companies will say that small claims with them are going up but we are not seeing that in terms of personal injury”.

Last year €217million was awarded to 8,845 who looked for compensation. But as the unemployment rate tops 400,000 bosses are paying out less because of the dwindling workforce. Mr Naughton added: “Employer liability is down, but that is to be expected in the circumstances because the number of people in work is down”.

Until the end of June this year, seven out of ten claims were for road accidents.

Chief executive Patricia Byron said the PIAB expects to save €60million in early settlements this year.

She added: “It is probably a reflection of the current economic climate that workplace accident claims in this period are down 3 per cent on the same period last year”.

The average award for damages in the first six months in 2009 was €23,392