

Fall in work injury claims

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HIGHER LEVELS of unemployment saw the number of work-related personal injury claims fall by more than 6 per cent last year, according to injuries board chief executive Patricia Byron said.

The contraction of the construction and manufacturing sectors, previously responsible for about 50 per cent of claims, drove the reduction, injuries board chief executive Patricia Byron said.

Preliminary figures for last year show that about 4,000 claims for work-related injuries were lodged, a 6.5 per cent reduction on the figure for 2008.

However, the overall number of personal injury claims increased by about 5 per cent to 25,919.

Some 8,645 awards amounting to €200 million were made to claimants, with motor and public liability claims rising by 7.5 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

"The volume of new motor and public liability claims submitted to us has picked up in the last quarter of 2009, but there is little evidence yet of a sustained surge in personal injury claims arising from the recession, as some had forecast," Ms Byron said.

Nearly three-quarters of awards (72 per cent) were for injuries caused by road traffic accidents.

The remainder was split between workplace (11 per cent) and public space (17 per cent) accidents.

Despite an increase in the number of claims, the total paid out fell by some €17 million.

The average award of €23,163 in 2009 was 6 per cent lower than in 2008, but 5 per cent greater than the 2007 average. The lowest and highest awards last year were €1,000 and €493,902.

"Each year, we handle an entirely new set of claims so variations in the average award will occur," Ms Byron said.

"In the year ahead, we would anticipate the average award may

fall as we deal with fewer workplace accidents, which tend to attract the higher awards."

Ms Byron said the adverse weather had not yet resulted in a surge in claims.

"As to whether they're all due to the negligence or malfeasance of another party, like someone throwing a bucket of water outside their gate, is hard to say."