

# Good Safety is Good for Business & Community



The impact of injury on a person, their family, their friends and the community as a whole can be devastating. Many injuries result in lifelong changes for all those involved. If we are serious about developing a positive safety culture and safer environments then we need to remind individuals, families, employers, communities, the health care system and the wider society that the cost of injuries are far greater than treatment and rehabilitation costs alone, and that the cost of a life, of lost potential and opportunities are immeasurable.

## How big is the injury burden in New Zealand?

- Injuries are the leading cause of death for ages 1 to 34 years; and the second leading cause of hospitalisations;
- More than 1,600 of us die each year from injuries, our men are dying at twice the rate of women;
- Injuries claim more potential years of our lives than cancer and heart disease combined;
- Nearly a quarter of a million of us have long-term disability as a result of injury; and
- Over 1.6 million injury claims are accepted by the ACC for injury, every year.



## Work-related injury burden:

- Work-related injuries kill on average two people each week in New Zealand;
- Just over 94% of these deaths occur in men;
- Deaths from work-related injury are primarily due to motor vehicles, machinery-related accidents, water-transport accidents, people being struck by falling objects, and people falling;
- Each year in New Zealand over 200,000 occupational injuries result in ACC claims. This corresponds to 12 injuries per 100 workers;
- About 74% of the work-related injuries occur in males;
- The manufacturing sector has the highest number of work-related injuries;
- Sprains and strains are by far the most frequent injury (90,000 claims), followed by open wounds (37,000 claims); and
- An estimated 50% of injuries result in impairment, and 6% in permanent impairment.

## Economic and social costs of injury:

- The cost of lost productivity is untenable. Not only do we lose 5% of GDP as a result of injury, we suffer the ongoing cost of health care treating the huge numbers involved.
- The financial cost to this country each year is an astonishing \$7 billion.
- It is important to recognise that activities outside of the workplace, which result in injuries, have both an economic and social cost to employers and employees.



## Risk factors affecting both workplace & community safety:

Many people think that events that lead to injury or death are “accidents”. Injuries are not unavoidable accidents. We know that:

- Injuries can be understood, predicted and prevented;
- There are attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours that minimise the potential for injury or death;
- Risk is a part of life, but we can choose the level of risk we take; and
- Environmental factors influence the outcomes of risk situations.



Risk factors affecting both workplace and community safety include:

- Fatigue;
- Stress;
- Motor vehicle traffic crashes;
- Violence;
- Attitudes to risk; and
- Alcohol & other drug misuse.



## Interrelated risks require interrelated solutions

As a nation, New Zealanders enjoy an active and challenging lifestyle and it is important to ensure that we continue to live in a society that embraces these values while striving to achieve the New Zealand Injury Prevention Strategy vision of ‘a safe New Zealand becoming injury free’. We know that:

- Injuries take lives, destroy families and ruin futures;
- They are traumatic, debilitating and expensive;
- Injuries can be understood, predicted, and prevented by building a safety culture;
- A positive safety culture is a shared set of beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours. We can build one in New Zealand; and
- Safe environments are social and physical surroundings or conditions that support the prevention of injury.



## The payoff from doing better

New Zealanders’ overall health will be boosted by better workplace health and safety. In particular, men’s health will improve, as more men work in high-risk occupations. It will also limit the level of impairment in our society: each year, about 6% of people who have work-related injuries are permanently impaired. Better workplace health and safety practices will also lift productivity and improve the quality of New Zealanders’ working lives. It will make workplaces more attractive, helping to retain our globally skilled workforce. It will also lower the costs of the health system and ACC. Finally, with greater community awareness and concern about health and safety issues, a positive and supportive climate for developing a positive safety culture and safer environments should prevail. This should be a two-way flow of influence, as workplace health and safety issues can also have a positive effect on community and recreational safety practices.

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