

Accidents in Construction

A summary & commentary on the latest construction accident statistics

Fatalities

1. The number of fatalities in 2006/07p increased by 28% above the exceptionally low figure for 2005/06.
2. Fatality incidence rates are significantly higher than in 2005/06 and is the highest rate since 2002/03. The number of fatalities is greater than 4 years ago but, since then, the workforce has risen by around 5% each year.
3. Injury data for construction shows a clear long term downward trend in the number of fatal accidents.

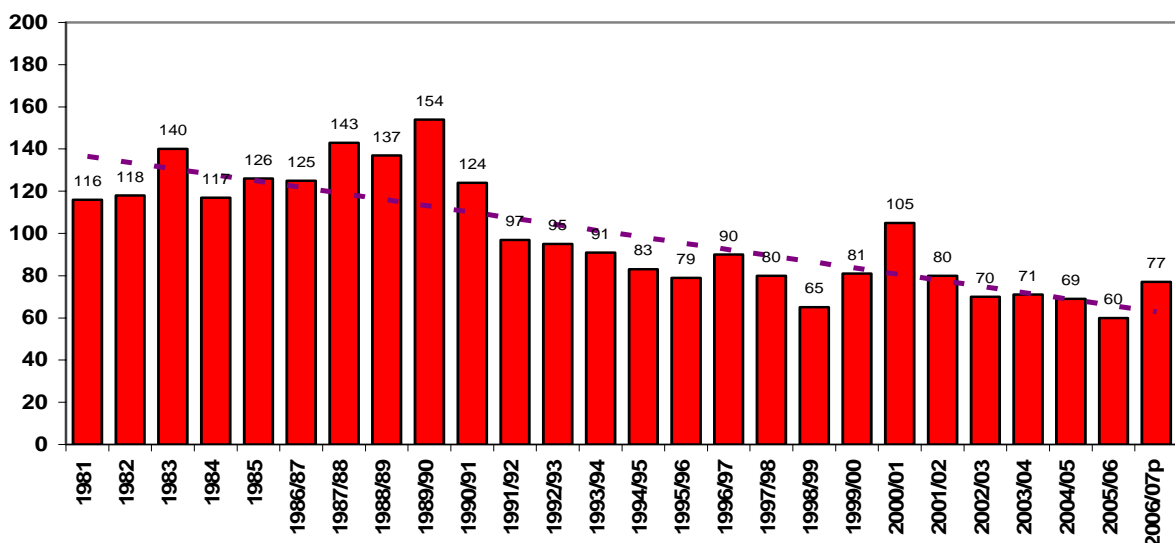
Other Injuries in 2006/07 (estimated)

4. The number of reported major injuries shows a slight increase of about 1.5%. The major injury rate will probably be lower than in 2005/06 because the increase in numbers is likely to be less than the growth in the workforce.
5. The number and rate of over 3 day injuries seem to be continuing to decline at about 5-6% per annum.

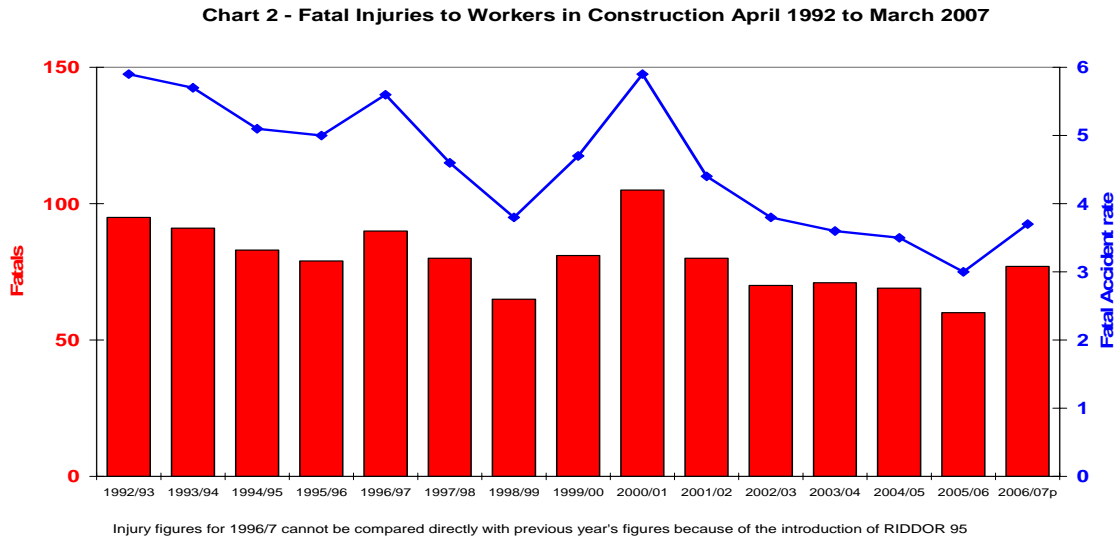
What has been happening so far

Fatal accidents

Chart 1 - Fatal Injuries to Workers in Construction Jan 1981 to March 2007

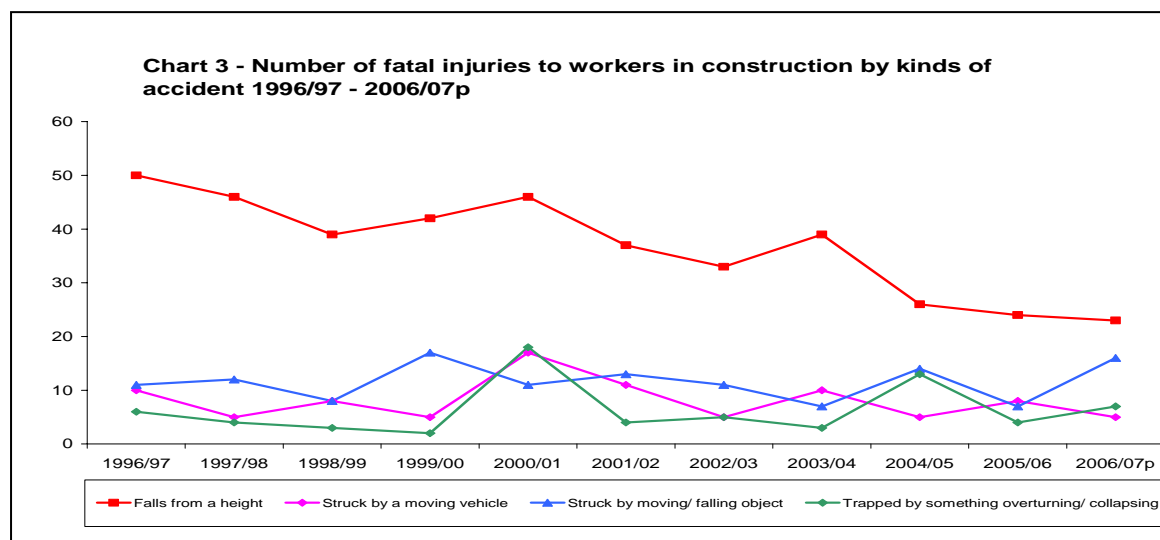


6. The long-term progress in reducing fatalities in construction is shown above. The dotted line shows the overall downward trend since 1981. The 2005/06 figure was the lowest on record (60, the final figure), but the number of fatalities in 2006/07p is 77.



7. The rate of fatal injury can be seen in the above chart. There were 3.7 deaths per 100,000 workers, an increase of 23% over the all time low figure of 3.0 per 100,000 workers achieved in 2005/06. Over the last 15 years there has been a statistically significant downward trend in the rate of fatal injury to workers; on average a 3.9% year on year decrease. However, the higher number and rate for 2006/07p changes a pattern consistent with continued reduction up to 2005/06 into one of no change since 2002/03.

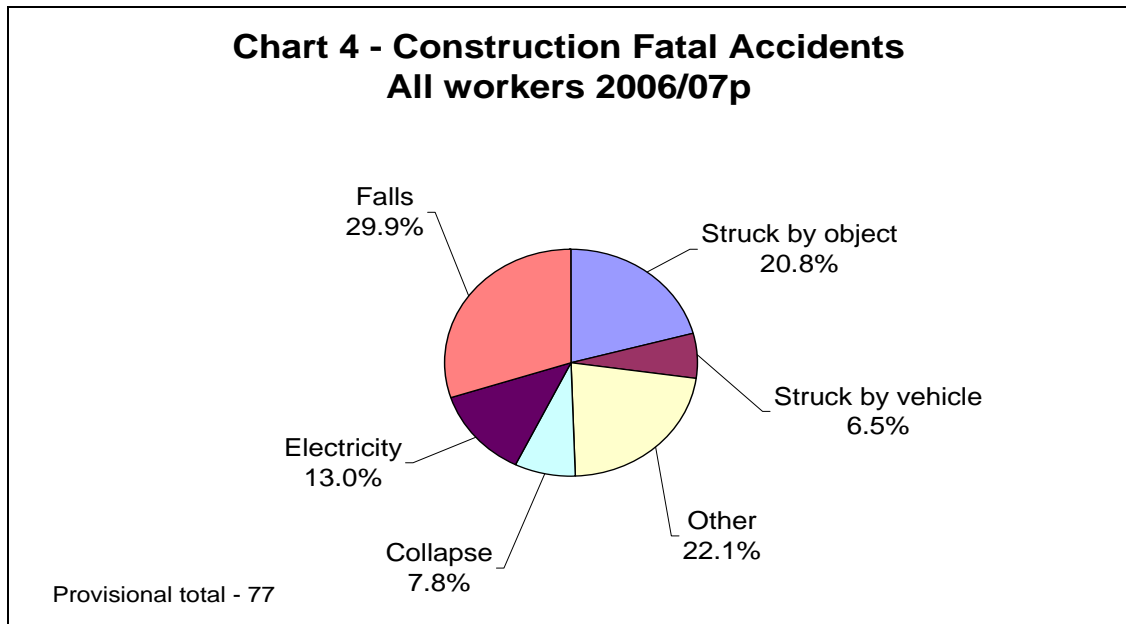
Trends in fatal accidents by kind



8. The only clear trend is the downward one for falls¹; the others kinds are very volatile due to the relatively small numbers involved.

¹ The downward trend in deaths from falls is an indicator of our (HSE and the industry) success in this area.

9. When the non-falls fatalities are aggregated, it is clear that, together, they have overtaken falls. Total fatalities in 2006/07p from causes other than falls from height are now at around 70% and appear to be rising as a proportion of all fatal accidents.

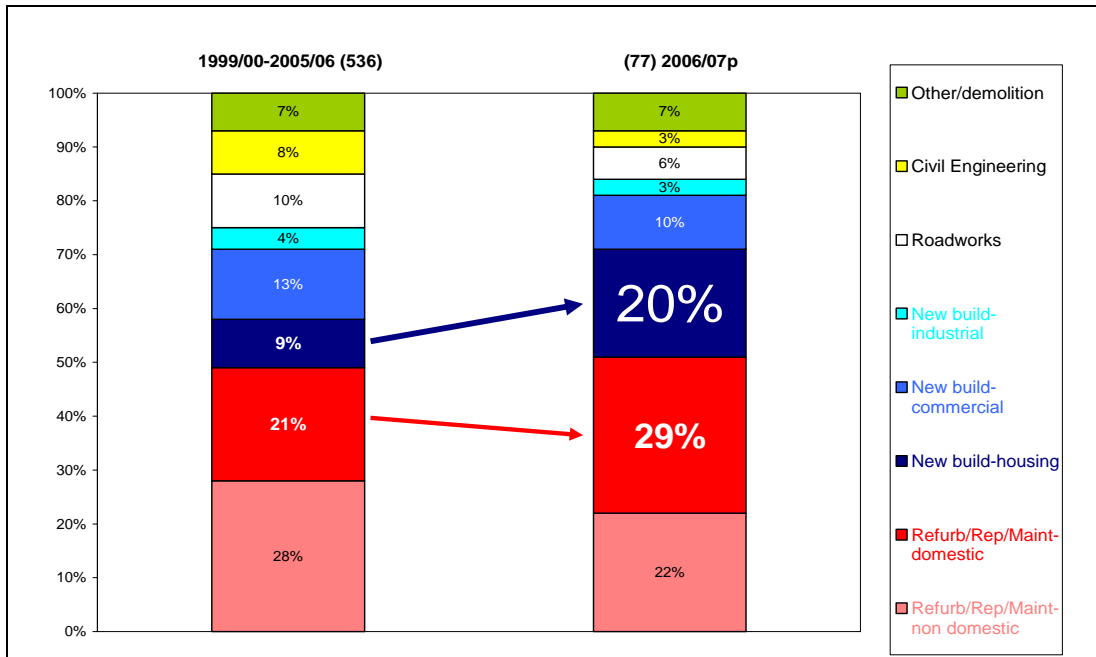


10. The following shows a comparison in the fatal accidents by kind for 2006/07p and 2005/06:

- Falls from height have declined slightly from 24 (around 40% of total) in 2005/06 to 23 (30% of the total) in 2006/07p
- Struck by vehicle (Transport) have declined, from 8 (13% of total) to 5 (6.5% of total) in 2006/07p
- Struck by (moving/falling objects) **have increased substantially** from 7 (12% of total) to 16 (over 20% of total) in 2006/07p
- Collapses have increased from 4 (7% of total) to 6 (8% of total) in 2006/07p.
- Amongst the “other” category accident kinds, **electricity has shown a sharp rise**, from 3 in each of the last two years, to 10 in 2006/07p (of these, 8 occurred during refurbishment/repair domestic).

Where have fatal accidents occurred?

Chart 5 - Where fatal accidents have increased in 2006/07



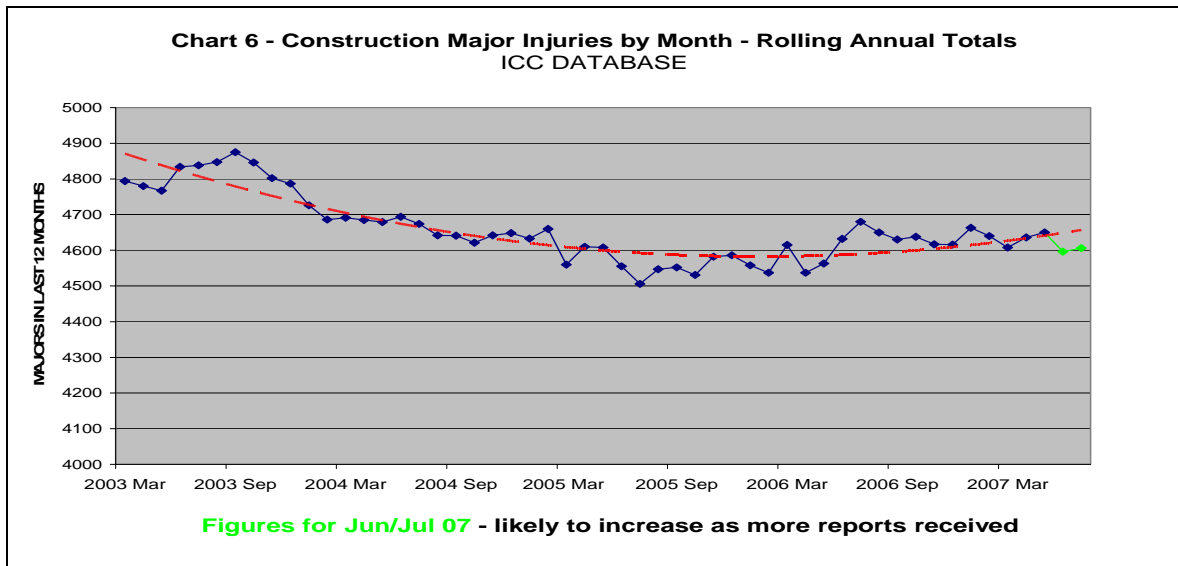
11. Identification of where construction fatal accidents have occurred is shown above. 51% of fatal accidents took place in **refurbishment, maintenance and repair** compared with 40% in the previous year. (The average over the previous 5 years was 49%). This means that in 2006/07p 14 more workers died in this sector than in 2005/06 – accounting for a substantial part of the increase. Refurbishment work output increased by about 11%² between 2001 and 2005 according to DTI figures.

12. 20% were in **new-build – housing** compared with 12% in the previous year. (The average over the previous 5 years was 9%). This means that in 2006/07p 8 more workers died in this sector than in 2005/06. This may indicate an increased risk in housing work or may just be a reflection of the significant growth in private housing – more than doubling the output between 2001 and 2005, according to DTI figures

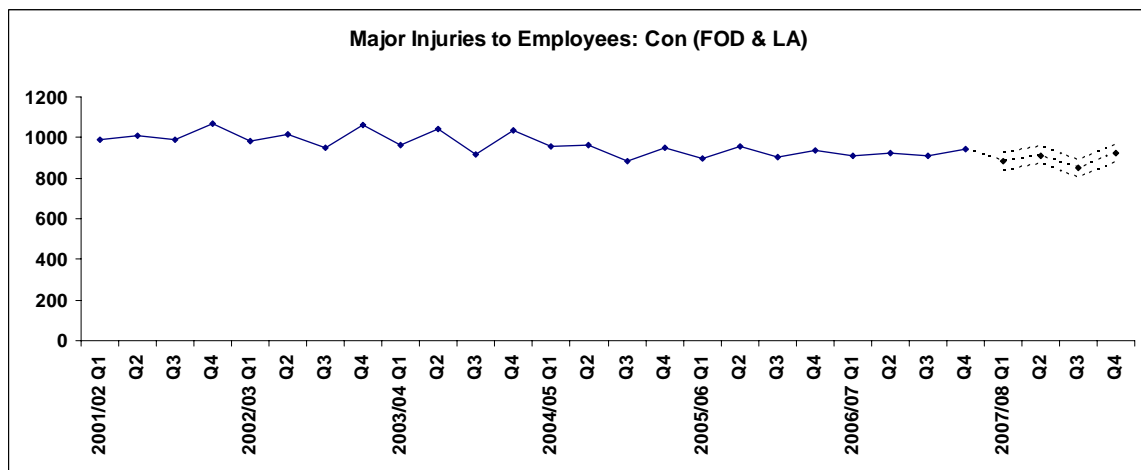
13. There were fewer fatalities in roadworks and civil engineering. This has partially offset the rise in refurbishment/repair and new build housing fatal accidents.

² At constant 2000 prices

Major Injuries

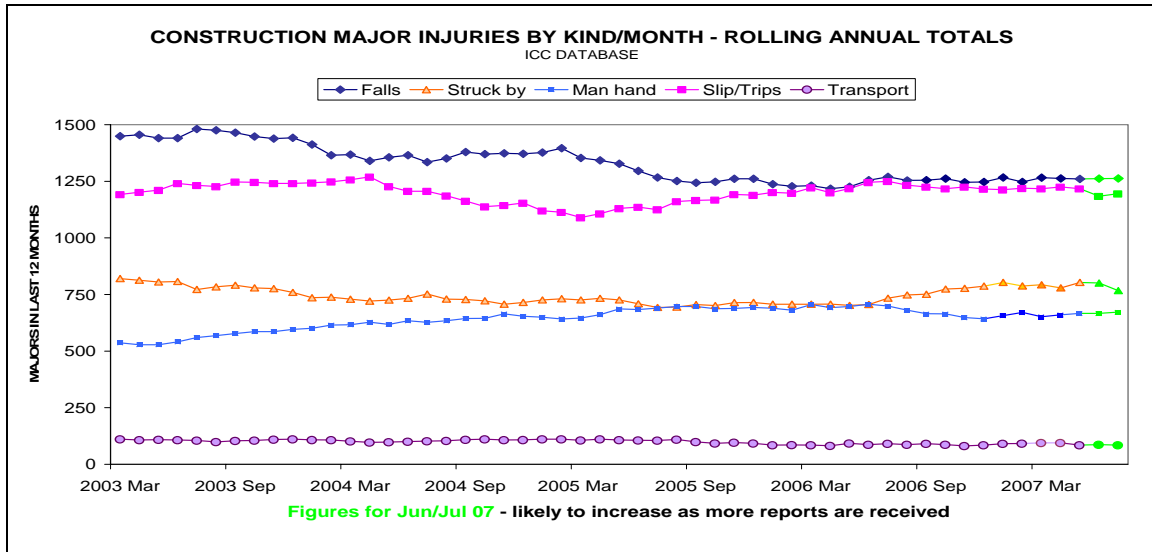


14. Trends in construction major injuries, obtained from the *live* ICC database are shown above. If these trends continue and are reflected in the published figures then we should expect a slight increase of about 1.5% according to our figures in the number of major injuries reported. We cannot predict the likely rate of major injuries with any certainty. However, the incidence rate is likely to drop slightly in 2006/07p as the increase in employment³ is likely to more than outweigh the likely increase in the number of major injuries referred to above.



15. The Fit3 forecasts based on DITTo (Dynamical Injury Targeting Tool) information (above) shows a near level picture for majors for 2005/06 (3690) and 2006/07 (3687) but then predicts a decrease to 3565 (plus or minus 169) for 2007/08. DITTo is a combination of published RIDDOR accident and ICC database information and the figures are for employees only.

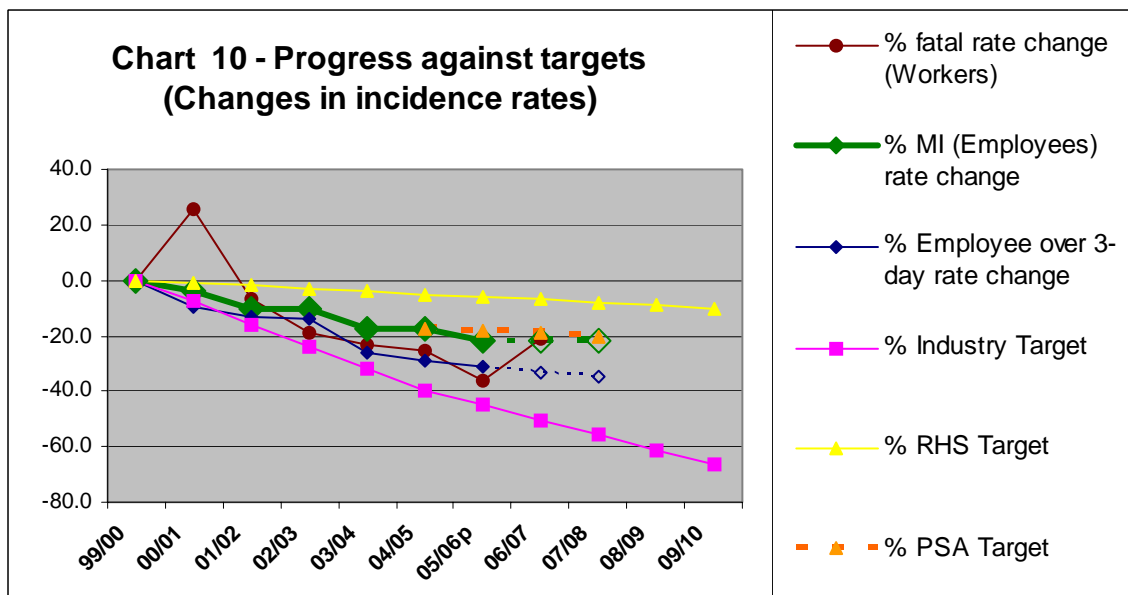
³ The average increase in employment over the last 11 years has been 1.9%, peaking at 7-8% in 1997/8 and 2003/4



16. Over the last few months there appears to have been a reversal of several medium to long-term major injury trends. Falls and struck-by incidents seemed to be generally on the way down, while slips, trips and handling injuries seemed to be rising. Recently these trends appear to have reversed, though it is too early to be sure. These changes are unusual, in that there seem to be two pairs that are almost mirror images of each other. We are not yet clear if they indicate real changes in industry practice, e.g. due to some of our publicity campaigns.

Progress against targets

17. The chart below shows our progress in achieving the PSA targets. The fatal accident figures have little impact on our PSA targets. If the major injuries rate continues to decline, or even stays level then we shall still meet our PSA targets for major injuries in construction, though the margin of safety is very small. It will, however, limit our contribution to the targets for HSE as a whole. (The implications for our progress against targets, given the 28% increase in the rate of fatalities, an estimated rate of major injuries and a 5% reduction in 3-day reports, are shown below. The dotted lines indicate the projections and are subject to change.)



Conclusion

18. It is clear that the biggest contributors to the increase in fatalities are refurbishment (particularly of domestic premises) and new-build housing. In construction there has been a relatively steady increase in employment for several years. This has introduced an additional 12% (220-246,000 workers) into the construction workforce over the last 5 years.