

Injury and illness on job declined last year

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The U.S. Department of Labor announced in November that the number of reported nonfatal occupational injury and illness cases that required days away from work to recuperate decreased by 9 percent in 2009 for private industry, state government and local government combined.

The total incidence rate for both the public and private sectors also decreased by 5 percent, to 117 cases per 10,000 full-time workers. Some of the decrease is attributed to the economic downturn and the accompanying decrease in employment and total hours worked in 2009, especially in construction and manufacturing.

This is the first time that these figures have been reported for state and local government employment. The report says that state and local government workers had much higher rates of injuries and illnesses requiring days away from work than workers in private industry.

The incidence rate among local and state government workers was 185 cases and 180 cases, respectively, per 10,000 full-time workers. This compares to 106 cases per 10,000 full-time employees in private industry. Thus, the incidence rate in state and local government is close to 80% higher than the rate in private industry. Dr. David Michaels, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, issued a statement stating: "We see a high occurrence among public employee occupations, particularly among transit and intercity bus drivers, law enforcement officers, emergency response workers, and nursing aides and orderlies."

Dr. Michaels also noted that about half of all state and local government employees work in states in which there is no OSHA coverage.

State and local government employees in

Kentucky are covered by the Kentucky safety and health statute, Chapter 338 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes. Dr. Michaels also said, "We are also concerned that musculoskeletal disorders continue for the second year in a row to comprise almost 30 percent of all workplace injuries and illnesses. ▲

Nonfatal Injury and illness cases decline in Kentucky: A 2007-2009 comparison

Consistent with the national trend, the rate of non-fatal occupational injury and illness cases declined in Kentucky in 2009 compared to the previous year, and we also looked at the data for Kentucky in 2007 and compared it to 2009, just to get a picture of how the number of accidents and illnesses changed during the first two years of Gov. Steve Beshear's administration, as reflected in the chart below. Note that while the incident rate declined in each major category, the percent of cases requiring "days away from work" actually increased, except for local government. Read the legend under the chart to help interpret the columns.

**Workplace injury and illness
Kentucky: 2009 and 2007**

All Employees, Including State & Local Gov't

Year	Avg. Empl	Rate [ⓐ]	# Cases	Rate [ⓑ]	% [ⓒ]
2009	1,712,500	4.3	73,638	1.3	30
2007	1,760,600	5.3	93,312	1.5	28

Private Industry

2009	1,452,000	4.2	60,984	1.2	29
2007	1,500,400	5.2	78,021	1.4	27

State Government

2009	83,100	4.4	3,656	1.3	30
2007	84,900	5.0	4,245	1.2	24

Local Government

2009	177,400	5.7	10,112	1.6	28
2007	175,300	6.2	10,869	2.0	32

- ⓐ Indicates number of cases per 100 full-time workers.
- ⓑ Indicates number of cases per 100 full-time workers with days away from work.
- ⓒ Indicates the percent of total cases that involved days away from work.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

State and local government workers had much higher rates of injuries and illnesses requiring days away from work than workers in private industry.