

Occupational Fatalities in Kentucky

ANNUAL REPORT



2023

Kentucky Fatality Assessment
and Control Evaluation

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KENTUCKY FATALITY ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL EVALUATION

The Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (KY FACE) program is an occupational fatality surveillance program of the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC)*. The goal of KY FACE is to prevent fatal work injuries by studying the worker, work environment, energy exchange resulting in fatal injury, and the role of management, engineering, and behavioral changes in preventing future injuries. KY FACE investigators evaluate data from multiple sources, including 1) interviews with employers, coworkers, witnesses, and other investigators; 2) examinations of the work site and equipment; 3) Occupational Safety and Health Administration reports, police reports, and medical examiner reports; 4) employer safety procedures; and 5) information provided by the Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics. KY FACE does not seek to determine fault or place blame on companies or individual workers. Rather, findings are summarized in narrative reports that include recommendations for preventing similar events in the future.

KY FACE respectfully acknowledges the individuals who lost their lives to workplace injury in Kentucky and the pain and loss endured by their families and colleagues. It is hoped that surveillance of these tragic workplace incidents will help government, industry, workers, and communities target their injury prevention efforts and resources.

*Organizationally, KIPRC is part of the University of Kentucky and is a bona fide agent of the Kentucky Department for Public Health. This work was supported by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as part of cooperative agreement 5 U60OH008483 totaling \$1,601,266 with 0% financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, NIOSH, CDC, HHS, or the U.S. government.

Prepared by:
Caitlin Northcutt, PhD
Rebecca Honaker, MPH
Patrick Maloney, MPH

Released by

Kentucky Injury Prevention
and Research Center
(KIPRC)
2365 Harrodsburg Road,
Suite B475
Lexington, KY 40504
TEL: (859) 257-4955
as bona fide agent for the
Kentucky Department for
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Kentucky Public Health
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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, KY FACE recorded the deaths of 100 individuals due to work-related injuries that occurred in Kentucky. This number represents a rate of 5 fatalities per 100,000 workers employed in the civilian labor force in Kentucky in 2023.

2023 Trends in Fatal Occupational Injuries:

- The number of occupational fatalities in Kentucky in 2023 rose from 97 occupational fatalities in 2022.
- Motor vehicle crash was the leading cause of occupational fatalities, followed by homicide and overdose.
- The construction industry sector had the highest number of occupational fatalities, followed by the trade, transportation, and utilities industry sector and the government industry sector.
- KY FACE recorded 12 workplace homicides in 2023, the highest number recorded since 1997.
- One-third of occupational fatalities among female workers in Kentucky in 2023 were due to homicide.
- Workplace overdoses increased by 57% in 2023 from 2022.
- Twelve individuals aged 70 years and older were killed due to workplace injuries. Twelve individuals aged 24 and younger, including one minor, were killed by workplace injuries.

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Charts displaying demographics of worker fatalities (pages 3-6)

Charts characterizing fatal occupational injuries (pages 7-11)

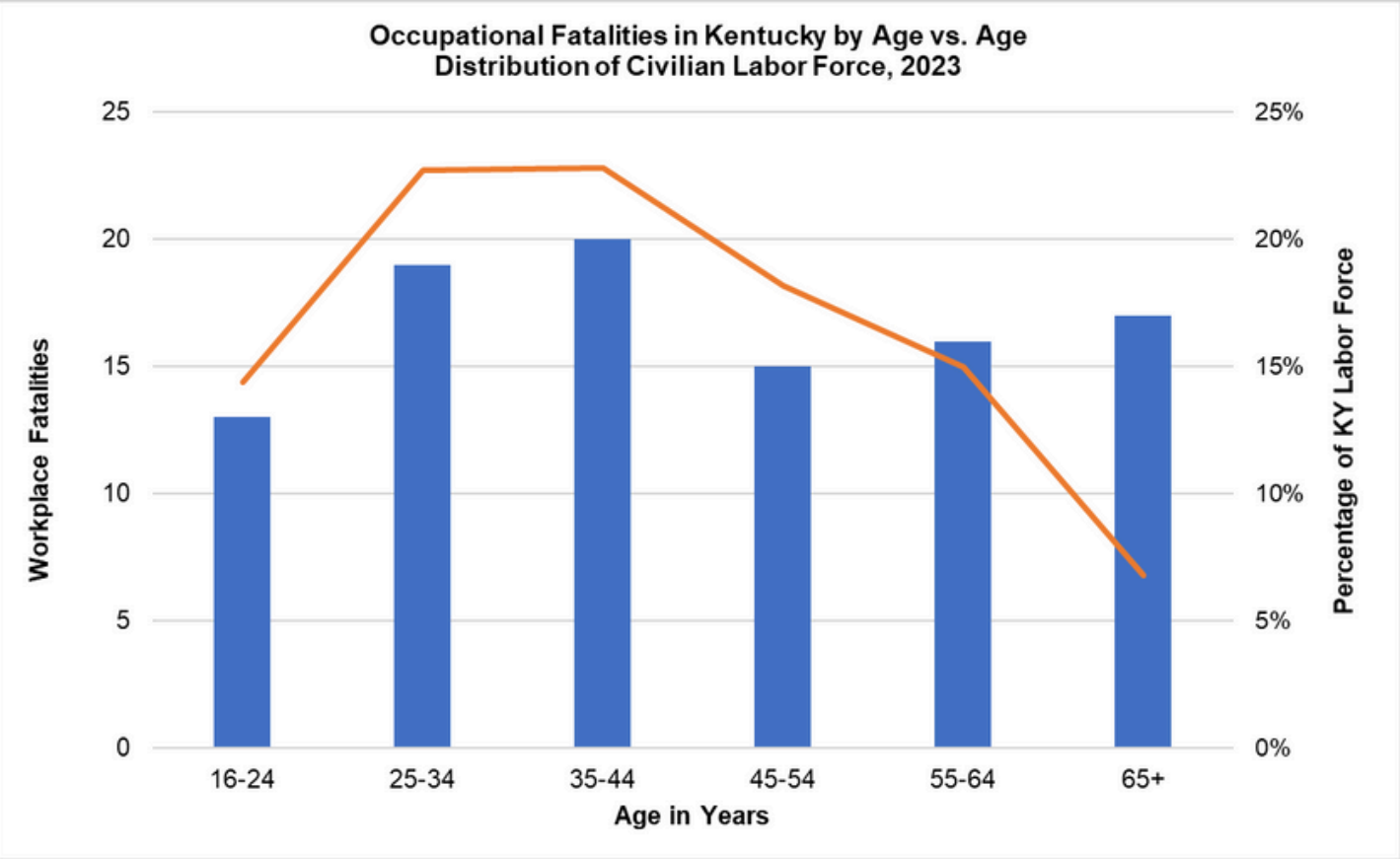
Summaries of the six investigative reports KY FACE published (page 12)

Summaries of the three hazard alerts KY FACE published (page 13)

KY FACE online resources and a link to provide feedback (page 14)

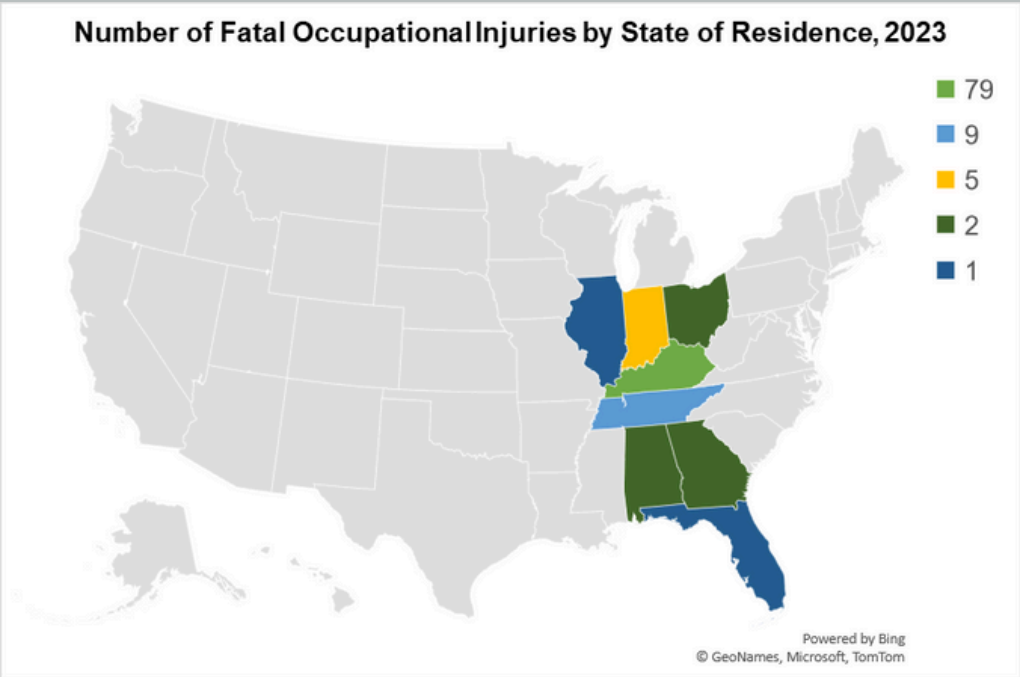
CHARTS

Demographics of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2023

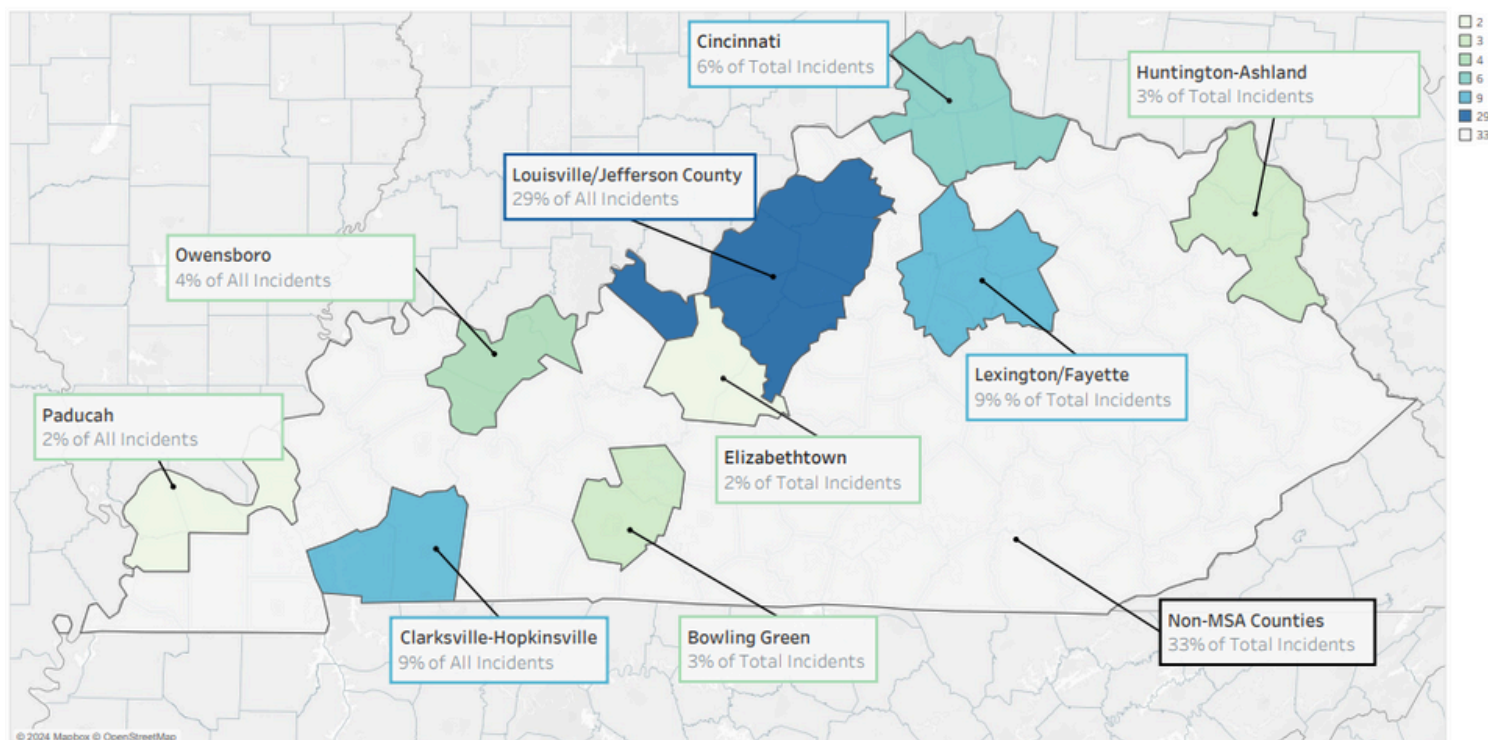


The bars above reflect fatal occupational injuries by age; the line reflects age distribution of the Kentucky labor force.

- While working in Kentucky in 2023, 100 residents of the following states died due to an occupational injury: Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.
- Twenty-two percent of workplace fatalities that occurred in Kentucky were among non-Kentucky residents.
- Eighteen percent of deaths that occurred among non-Kentucky residents were due to motor vehicle crashes, compared to 42% in 2022.



Fatal Occupational Injuries in Kentucky's Metropolitan Statistical Areas, 2023

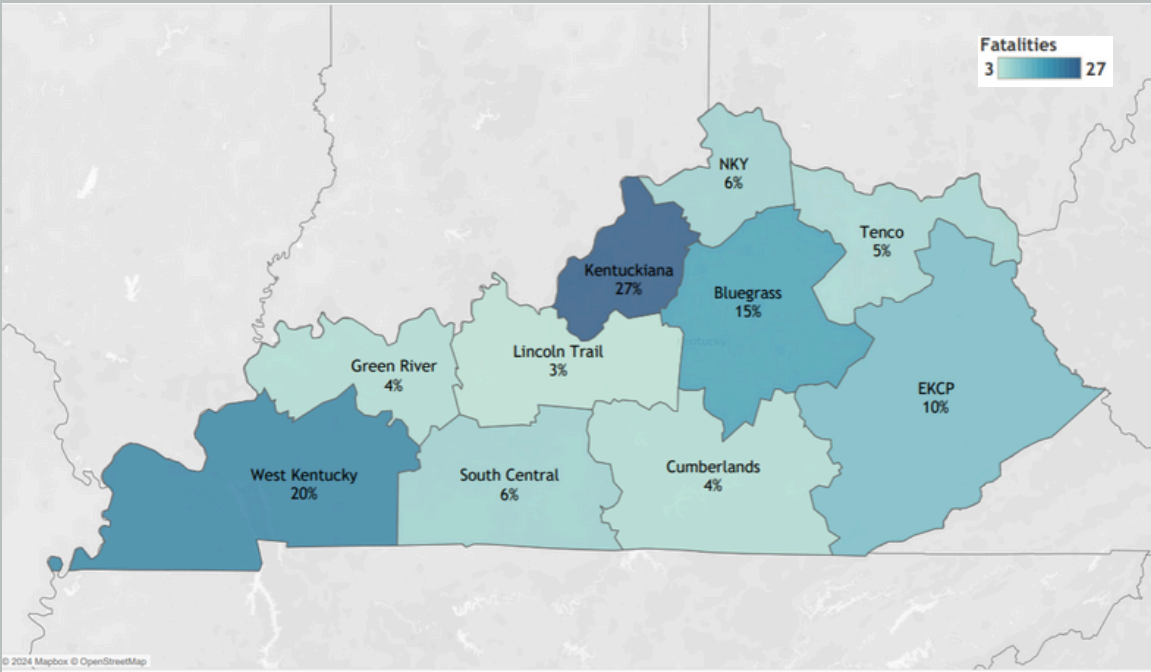


Metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are a product of the Office of Management and Budget and are used by the Census Bureau and other federal agencies for statistical analysis. An MSA has a central county in which a majority of the population lives in urban areas of 10,000 population or greater. Counties surrounding the central county can be included in the MSA as outlying counties if 25% of their workers living within the outlying county work within the central county, or if 25% of the outlying county's employment is held by workers from the central county.

There are nine MSAs that contain Kentucky counties. Of those nine MSAs, six are centered on a Kentucky county: Louisville/Jefferson County, Lexington/Fayette County, Paducah, Owensboro, Elizabethtown, and Bowling Green. The remaining three MSAs are Cincinnati, Huntington-Ashland, and Clarksville-Hopkinsville.

Of the 100 fatalities documented in the 2023 FACE report, 67% were the result of an incident occurring in an MSA, while the remaining 33% occurred in non-MSA counties. Residents of MSA counties account for 59% of the statewide population, while 41% of the population reside in non-MSA counties. The MSA with the highest portion of fatalities was Louisville/Jefferson County, with 29% of the incidents and 24% of the statewide population.

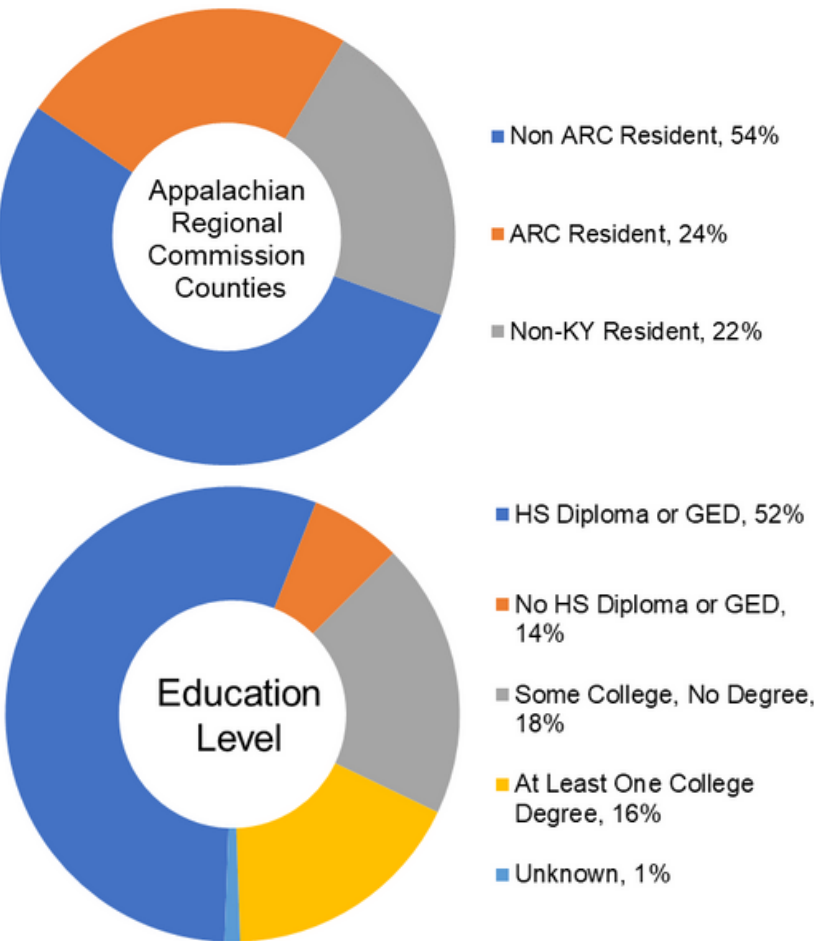
Percentage of Kentucky Fatal Occupational Injuries by Local Workforce Areas, 2023



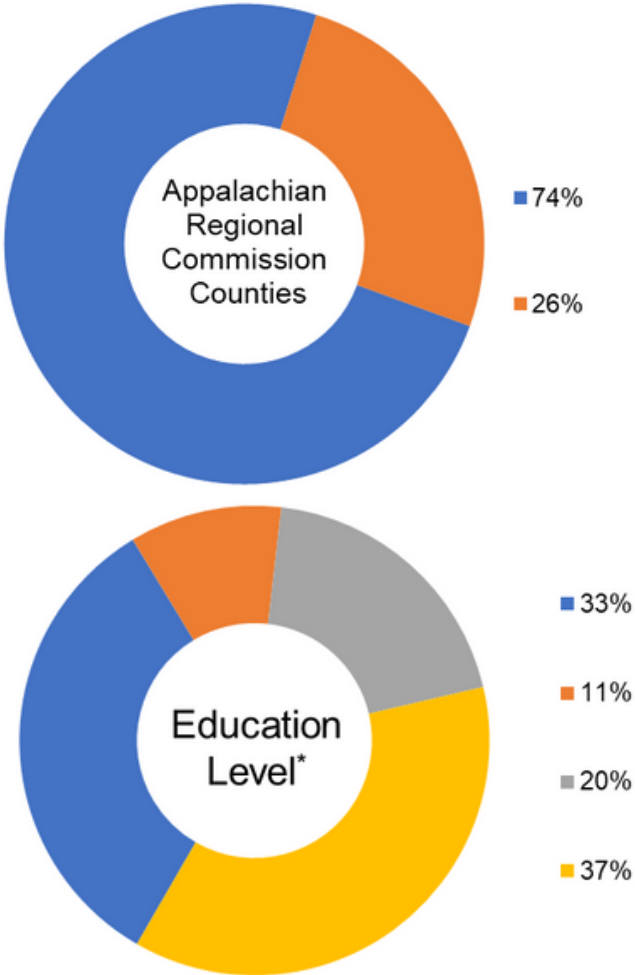
Incidents by County

- **Jefferson County (25%).** Jefferson County is the location of the state's largest city, Louisville, and contains approximately 17% of the state's population.
- **Trigg County (9%)** All of the fatal injuries that occurred in Trigg County were due to a helicopter crash in March of 2023.
- **Fayette County (5%)**
- The remaining fatalities (62%) are distributed across 43 of Kentucky's 120 counties, with no more than four fatal incidents in any one county.

Fatal Occupational Injuries , 2023
(100 total)

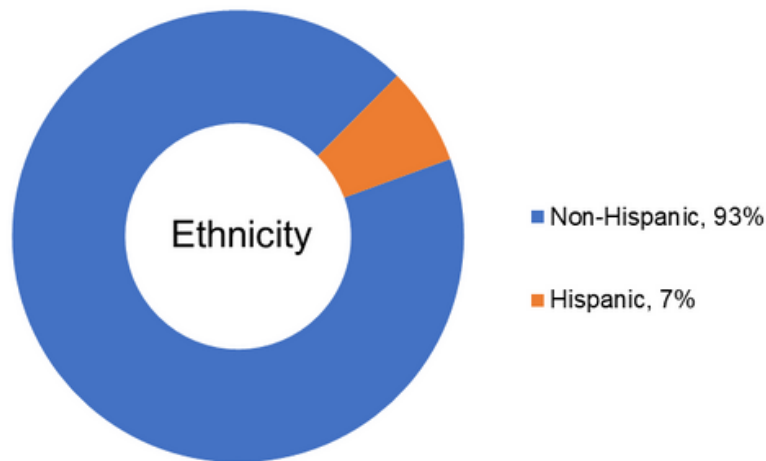
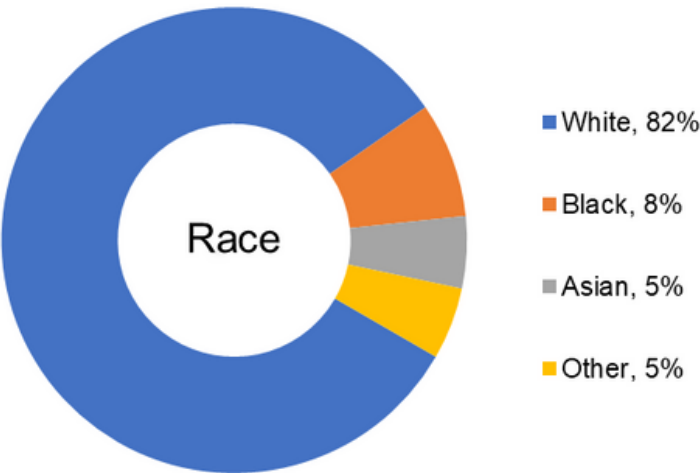
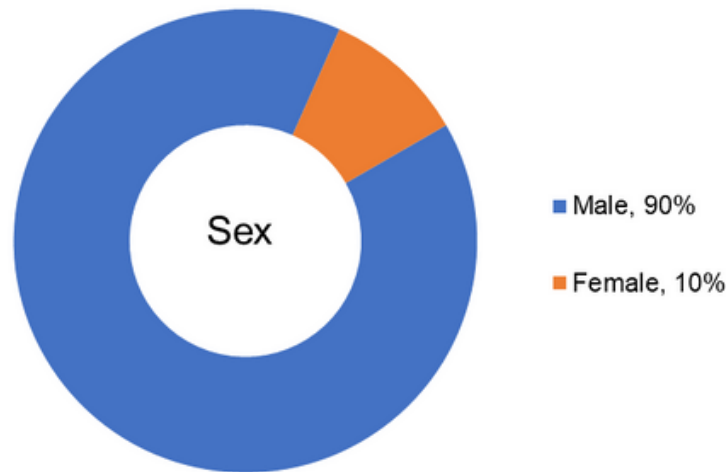


Civilian Labor Force in Kentucky
(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)

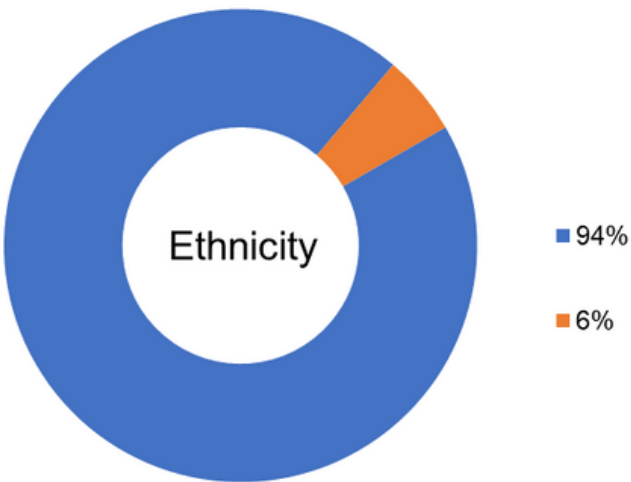
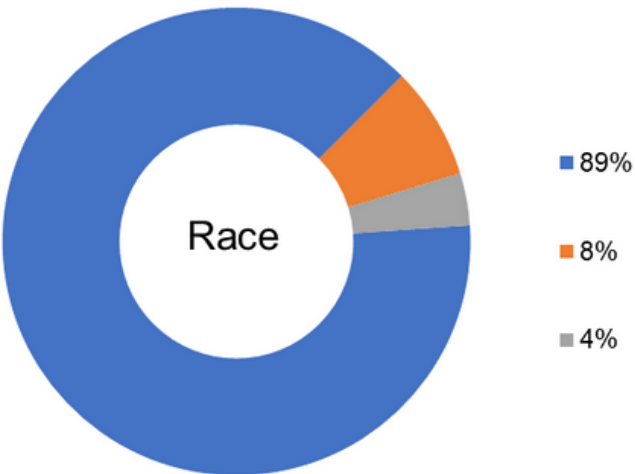
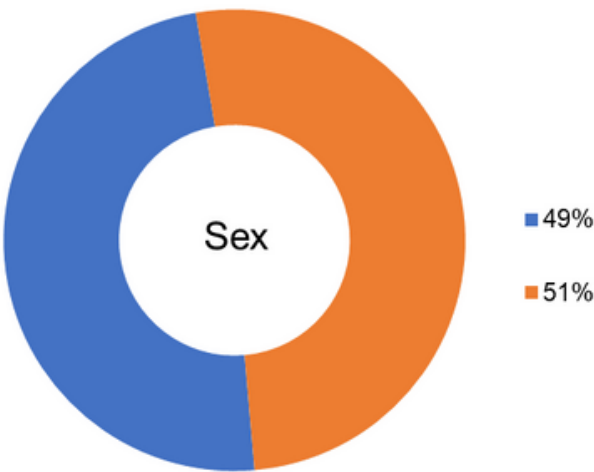


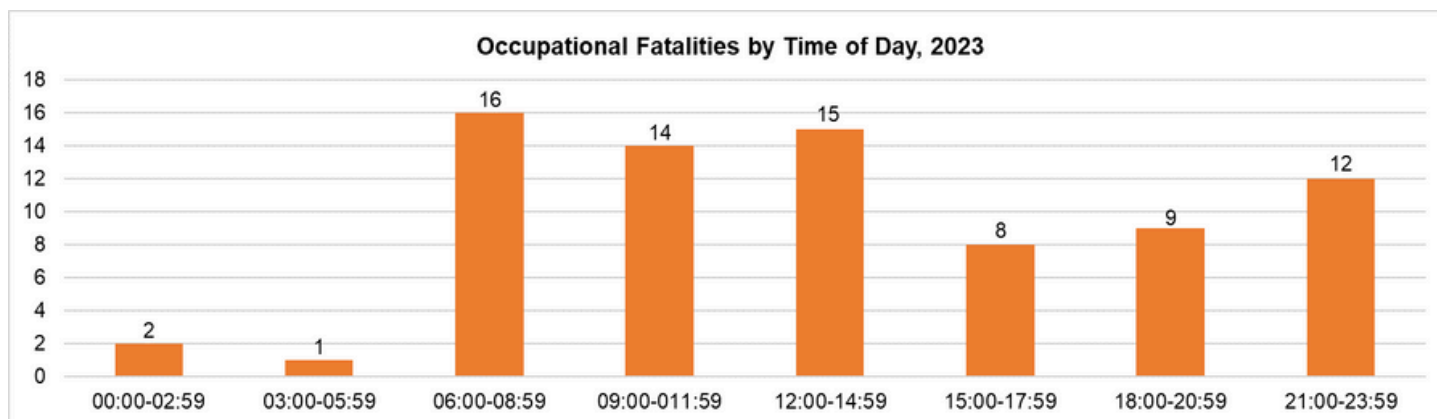
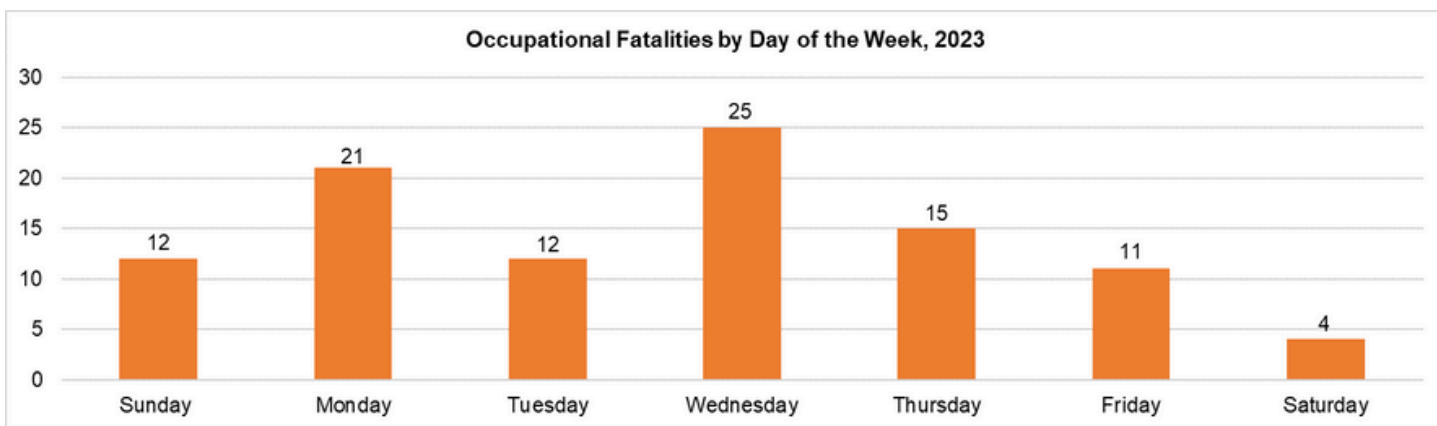
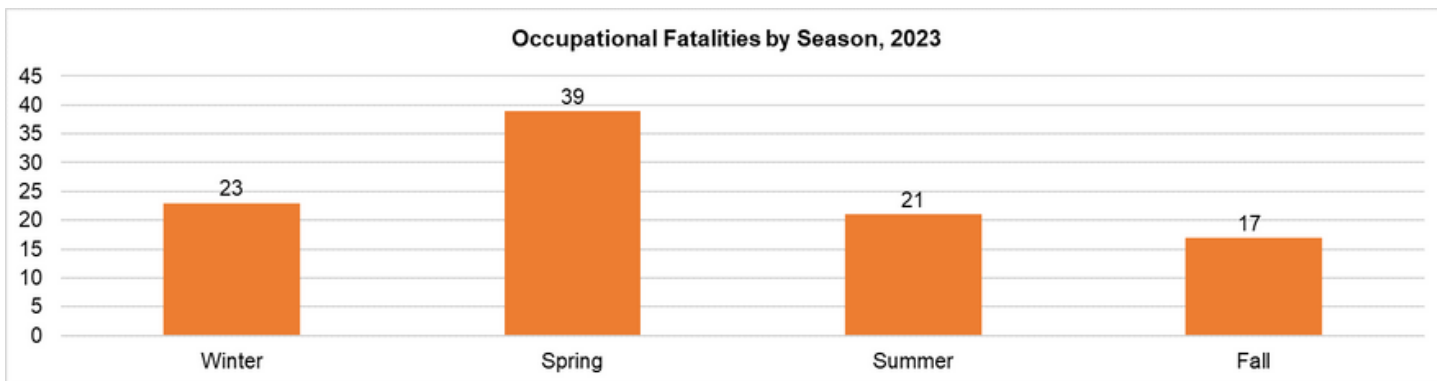
Note: Statewide education level chart displays data for the total Kentucky population 25 years and older. All other statewide data are restricted to the Kentucky Civilian Labor Force.

Demographics of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2023
(101 total)



Civilian Labor Force in Kentucky
(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)

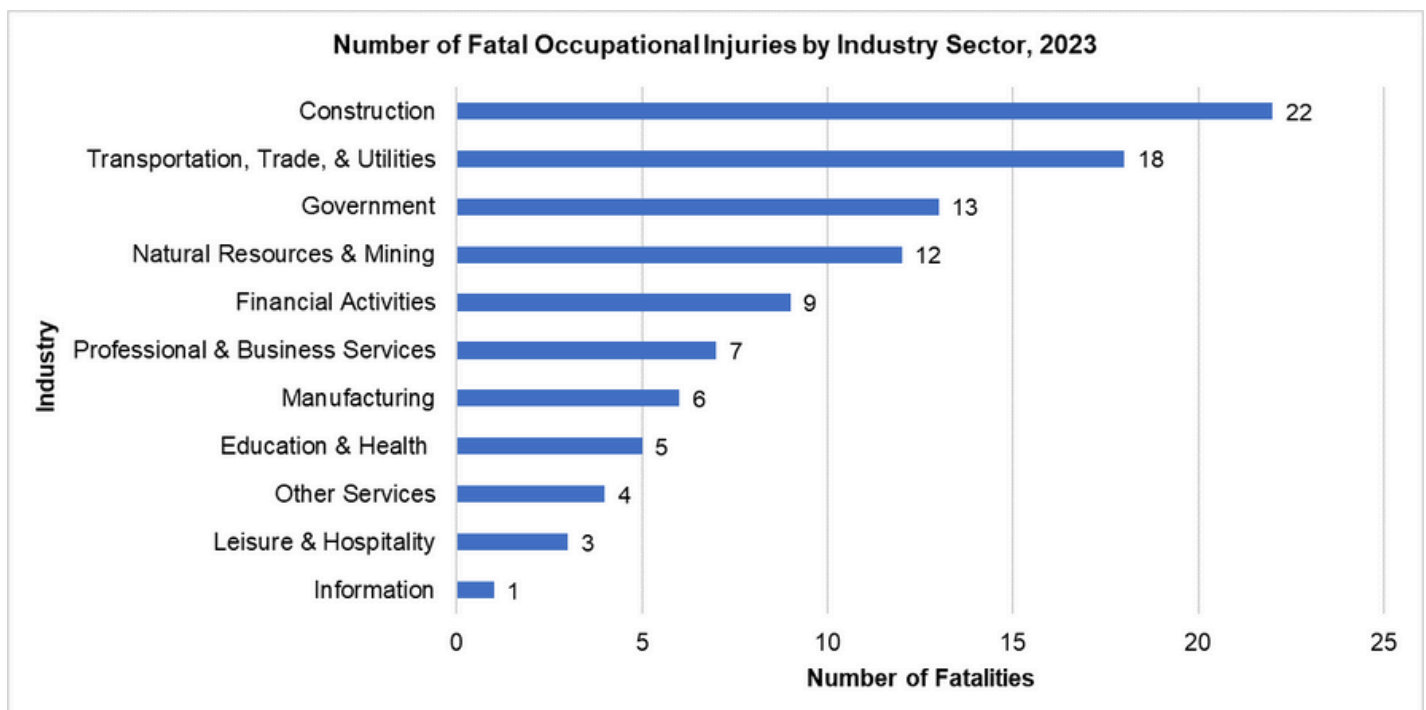
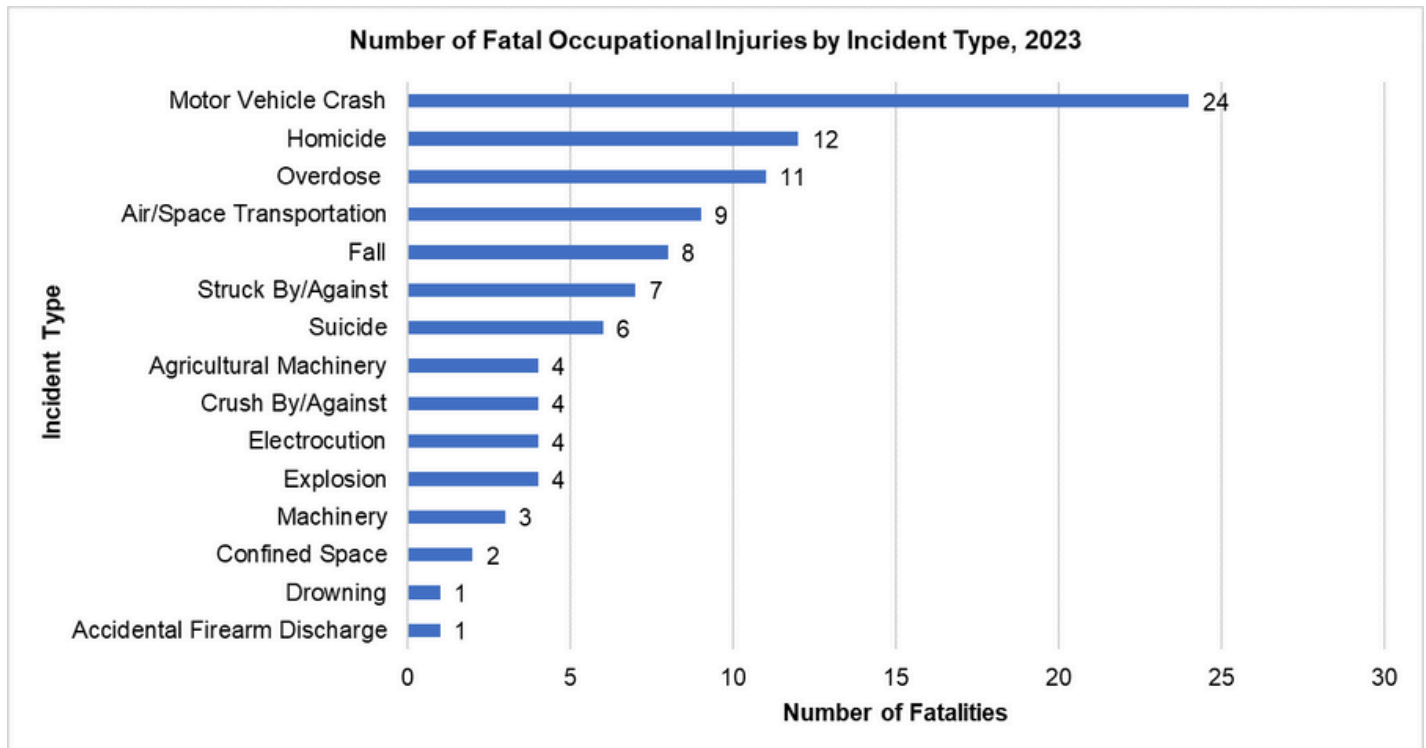




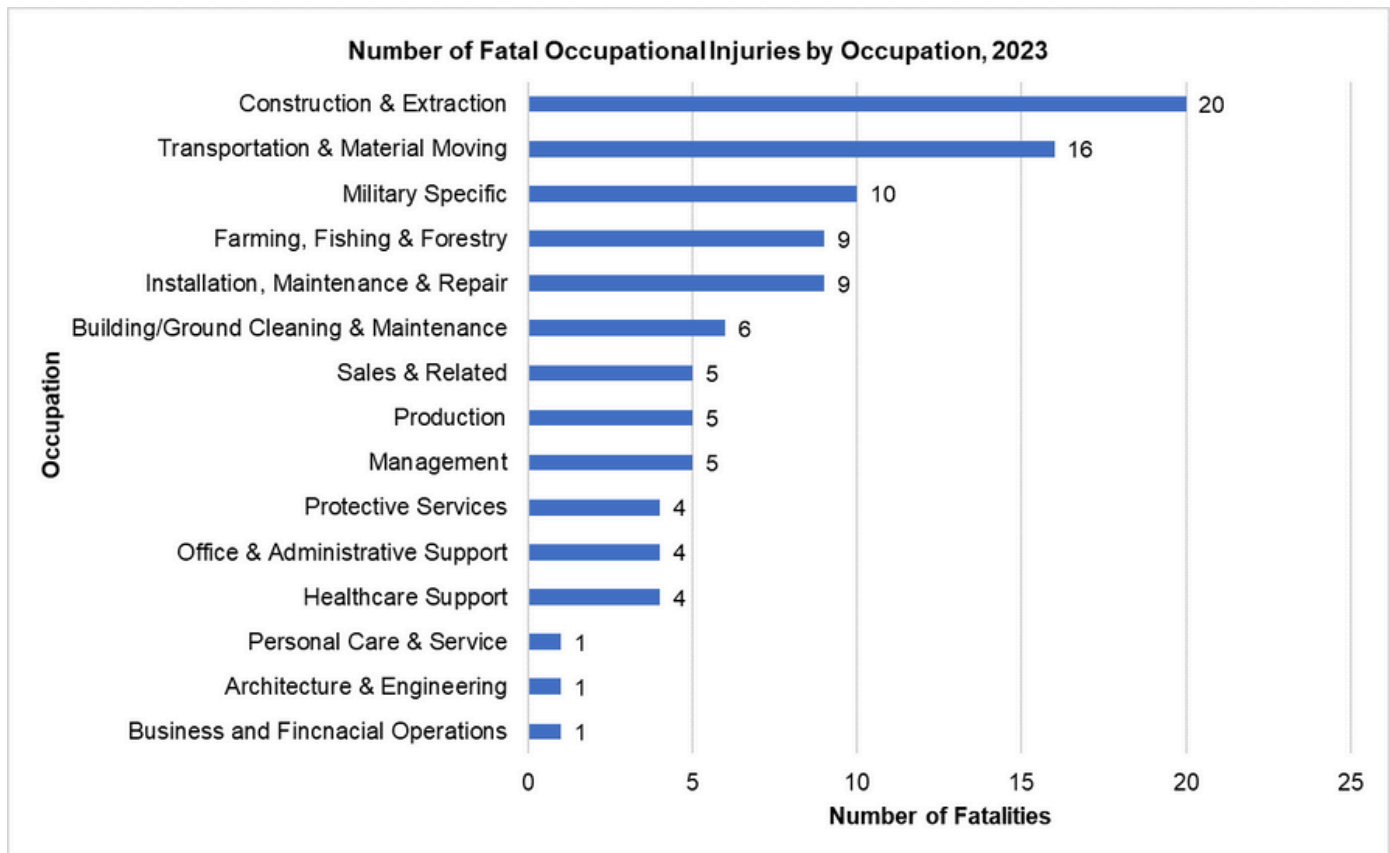
Note: Fatalities without a known time of incident are not included in the above chart.

Fatal Occupational Injuries by Incident Type & Industry Sector

- Of the 100 occupational fatalities in Kentucky in 2023, 24% (n=24) were caused by motor vehicle crashes (MVC). MVC fatalities accounted for a lower percentage of overall occupational fatalities in 2023 than in 2022 (28%), 2021 (29%), 2020 (33%), 2019 (38%), and 2018 (37%).
- Homicide was the second leading cause of occupational fatalities in Kentucky in 2023, with 12% (n=12) of fatalities. This represents a 71% increase in the number of workplace homicides from 2022 (n=7).
- One-third of occupational fatalities among female workers in Kentucky in 2023 were due to homicide.
- Overdoses accounted for 11% (n=11) of total occupational fatalities in Kentucky in 2023. This represents a 57% increase in overdose fatalities from 2022 (n=7).
- The Construction industry sector accounted for 22% of occupational fatalities in 2023, followed by the Trade, Transportation & Utilities industry sector (18%).



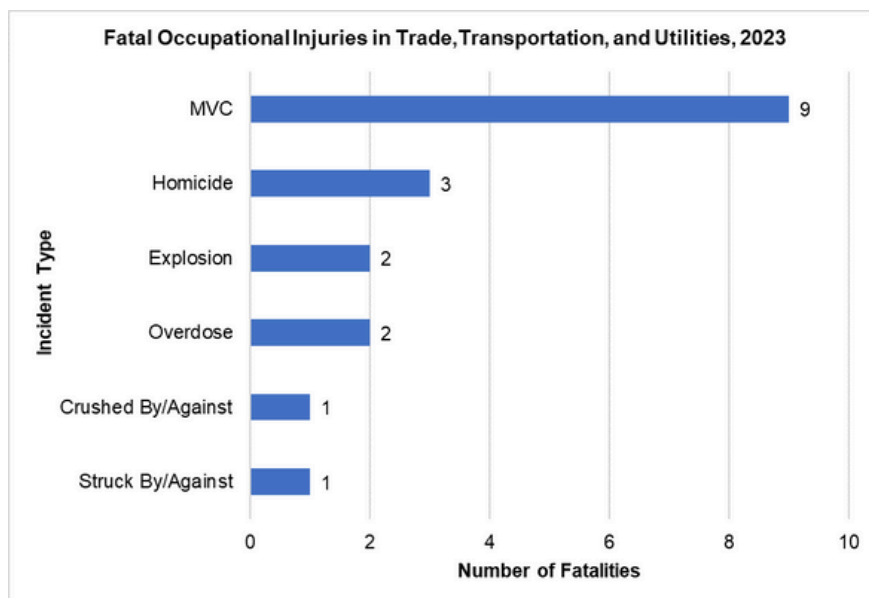
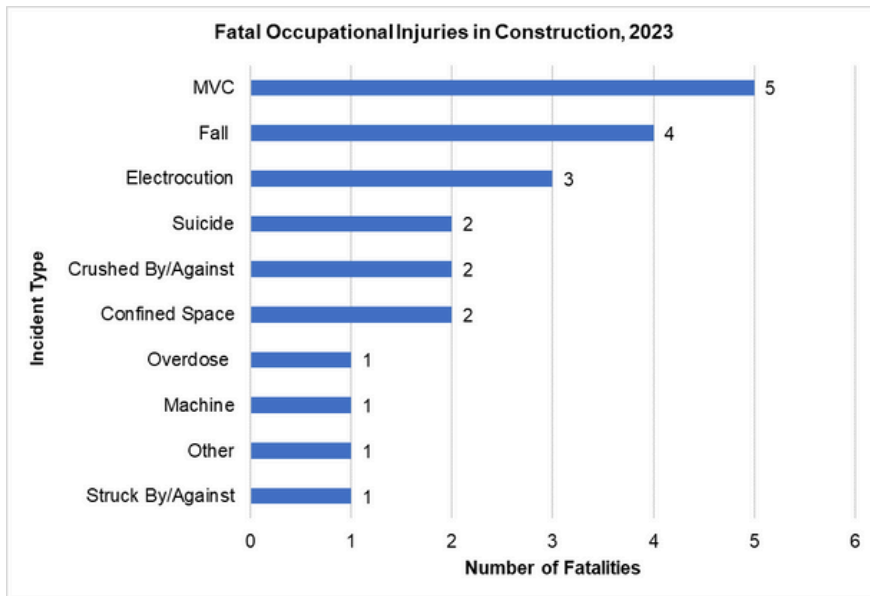
Fatal Occupational Injuries by Occupation



- Of the 20 fatal injuries in the construction & extraction occupations in 2023, 20% (n=4) resulted from a fall, 15 (n=4) were due to a motor vehicle crash, and 15% were killed in crushed by/against incidents (n=4). Fifty-six percent (n=9) of the fatal injuries in the transportation & material moving occupations were among truck drivers.
- All of the fatal injuries that occurred in the military-specific occupations were due to a helicopter crash in March of 2023.
- Of the 9 farming, fishing, and forestry fatalities in 2023, 56% (n=5) were among farmers and 44% (n=4) were employed in logging or forestry occupations.
- Thirty percent (n=3) of fatal injuries in the installation, maintenance & repair occupations were due to suicide and 30% (n=3) were due to overdose.



Fatalities by Select Industry Sectors



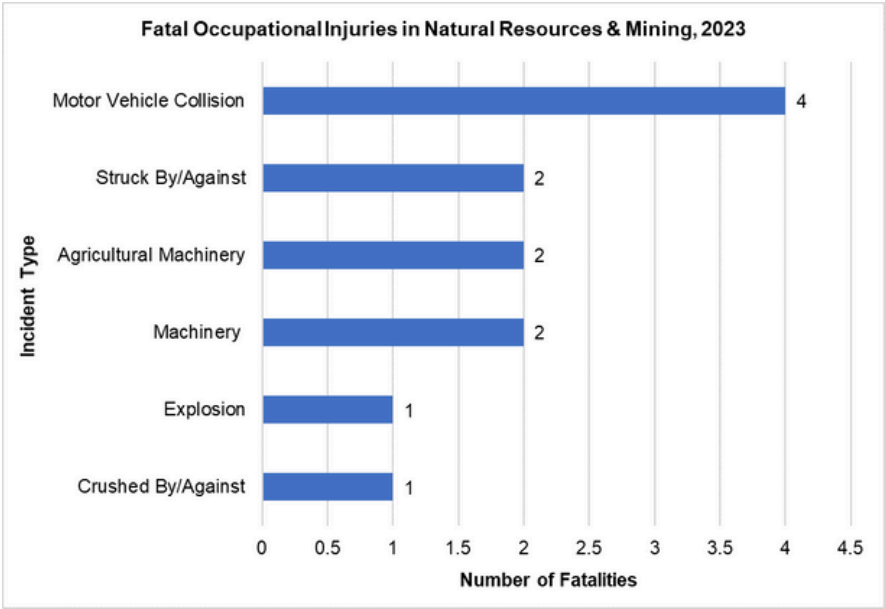
Construction

- Twenty two percent of workplace fatalities occurred in the construction industry sector in 2023, compared to 18% (n=17) in 2022.
- In 2023, motor vehicle collisions were the leading cause of fatal injuries in the construction industry sector, followed by falls and electrocution.

Trade, Transportation, & Utilities

- The trade, transportation, and utilities industry sector accounted for 18% of workplace fatalities in 2023, down from 28% (n=27) in 2022.
- Fifty-six percent of cases in this industry sector involved truck drivers, up from 48% in 2022.
- Homicide accounted for 30% (n=3) of fatal injuries in this industry sector. Two of the three homicide victims were foreign-born retail clerks.

Fatalities by Select Industries (continued)



Natural Resources & Mining

- Twelve percent (n=12) of occupational fatalities in 2023 occurred in the natural resources & mining industry sector. This decreased from 23% in 2022.
- Forty-two percent of deaths in this industry sector were among farmers, 33% worked in logging and forestry operations, and 25% worked in the mining industry.

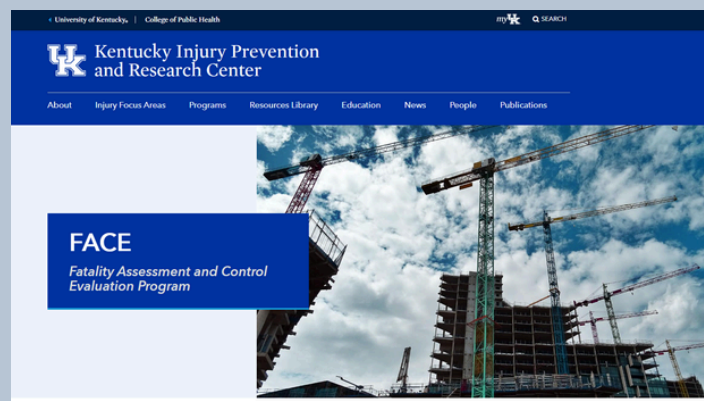


Investigation Program

On-site investigations of selected cases are conducted by a KY FACE investigator.

Investigative reports are reviewed by professional safety experts and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health prior to publication. Investigative reports seek to identify root causes of fatal workplace incidents and provide targeted recommendations for workplace injury prevention.

FULL INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS



Complete investigative reports can be viewed at <https://kiprc.uky.edu/fatality-assessment-and-control-evaluation-face>.

FACE Investigation Summaries

Case ID: 22KY011 **Industry:** Roofing Contractor [Versión en español](#)

[Roofing Worker Dies from a Fall](#) A 36-year-old Hispanic roofer suffered a fatal fall while installing roofing on a two-story apartment building. The worker fell 18 feet to a sidewalk below and died on scene due to injuries suffered from the fall.

Case ID: 23KY096 **Industry:** Finish Carpentry Contractor [Versión en español](#)

[Carpenter Dies After Fall from 6-Foot Ladder](#) A 52-year-old carpenter and his co-worker were obtaining measurements in preparation for a plywood installation project. The victim's ladder overturned and he fell to the concrete below.

Case ID Number: 23KY005 **Industry:** Roofing Contractors [Versión en español](#)

[Roofer in Boom Lift Electrocuted by Overhead Electrical Line](#) Two roofers were using a telescoping boom lift to descend from a roof when they contacted overhead electrical lines. The head of the lift operator, a 27-year-old roofing worker, contacted one of the electrical lines, and he was fatally electrocuted.

Case ID Number: 22KY070 **Industry:** Farm Supplies Merchant Wholesalers

[Farm Services Driver Killed in Highway Crash](#) A 49-year-old farm services employee was killed when the light-duty pickup truck he was driving was struck by another vehicle.

Case ID Number: 23KY127 **Industry:** Trucking

[Teen Truck Driver Dies in Single Vehicle Semi-Truck Rollover](#) A 19-year-old commercial truck driver was traveling on a rural Kentucky highway when the vehicle she was operating left the roadway and overturned. The victim succumbed to the injuries she sustained in the crash.

Case ID Number: 24KY022 **Industry:** Concrete Additive Manufacturer

[Manufacturing Laborer Falls from Elevated Pallet, Succumbs to Injuries](#) A 62-year-old male manufacturing laborer was mixing concrete additive solution when he fell from a pallet elevated on a forklift. The victim succumbed to the injuries sustained in the incident.

Hazard Alerts

The Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance (KOSHS) program produces Hazard Alerts based on trends observed in FACE data and investigations.

Complete versions of Hazard Alerts can be found at:


<https://kiprc.uky.edu/programs/fatality-assessment-and-control-evaluation-face/hazard-alerts>.

Workers Killed in Falls from Ladders

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls, trips, and slips are the leading cause of fatalities in the construction industry, accounting for over a third of all construction industry deaths in the US. From 2013 to 2022 in Kentucky, eight workers were killed in falls from ladders. Over the same period of time, Kentucky construction industry employees filed 447 first reports of injury with lost time due to falls from ladders.


Versión en español:

[Muertes de trabajadores por caídas de escaleras](#)



HAZARD ALERT

Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance—May 2024



WORKERS KILLED IN FALLS FROM LADDERS

Recommendations:^{4,5}

- Train each worker to recognize and minimize ladder-related hazards.
- For work at heights, consider using a scaffold or aerial lift. The guardrails and wider work platform can reduce your risk of falling.
- Inspect the ladder for defects or damage every time you use it. If the ladder is damaged, tag it "do not use".
- Make sure the ladder is positioned on level, solid footing.
- Always check your ladder's duty rating to make sure it will support you and your tools.
- Position the ladder near your work to avoid overreaching. Keep your body centered between the side rails of the ladder. Even a slight overreach can lead to a fall.
- Secure the area around ladders that are placed in a location where they can be bumped, such as in passageways or doorways.
- Never step on the top rung of a ladder.

What is the hazard?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls, trips, and slips are the leading cause of fatalities in the construction industry, accounting for over a third of all construction industry deaths in the US.¹ From 2013 to 2022 in Kentucky, eight workers were killed in falls from ladders.² Over the same period of time, Kentucky construction industry employees filed 447 first reports of injury with lost time due to falls from ladders.³

The following are the two most recent ladder fall-related worker deaths that occurred in Kentucky:

- Case 1: A 52-year-old carpenter (victim) and his co-worker were obtaining measurements in preparation for a plywood installation project in a restaurant that was under construction. The victim utilized a 6-ft. fiberglass step ladder, while his co-worker utilized a 10-ft. fiberglass step ladder. The victim was holding one end of a measuring tape and reaching beyond the ladder side rails when his ladder overturned. He fell and struck the concrete surface below. (2023) [\(Read the full report\)](#)
- Case 2: A 58-year-old carpenter was attempting to remove a piece of board from a covered porch. The ladder he was standing on kicked out and he fell, hitting his neck on a floor jack handle. (2024)



Confined Space Fatalities

From 1994 to 2022, there have been 56 workers killed in confined spaces in Kentucky. Six workers were killed in double-fatality events. Nearly 50% of workers killed in confined space incidents worked in construction and extraction occupations, and 36% of all workers killed in confined space incidents worked in the construction industry.

Versión en español:

[Trabajadores muertos en espacios confinados](#)



Fatal Drug Overdose in the Workplace

In 2020 the KYFACE program recorded 12 workplace drug overdose fatalities, the highest number since its inception in 1994. This alarming trend continued into 2021 with 18 drug overdose fatalities occurring in Kentucky workplaces, which was three times higher than the number recorded in 2019. The number of workplace overdoses decreased to 7 in 2022.

Versión en español:

[Sobredosis Mortal en el Lugar de Trabajo](#)

KY FACE Data Source

This report was produced by the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, as a bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health. Data source: KY FACE Database. The KY FACE database collects occupational fatality data from multiple surveillance sources, including but not limited to death certificates, OSHA-36 forms, Mine Safety and Health Administration Fatalgrams, newspaper clippings, workers' compensation forms, Kentucky State Police Crash Data, coroner reports, and toxicology reports.



Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center

Bona fide agent for Kentucky Department for Public Health

2365 Harrodsburg Road, Suite B475, Lexington 40504 · 859-323-4750

KY FACE Social Media

KY FACE maintains a social media presence, enabling us to share references and links to occupational injury prevention materials and sources. Please visit us:



@KOSHSNews



@KOSHSNews

GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

All Kentucky FACE publications are posted on the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center website:

<https://kiprc.uky.edu>

Please [click here](#) or use the QR code below to complete a brief survey. Your feedback helps us to improve future output.



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