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Workplace Fatalities in New Mexico, 2013

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In the United States and New Mexico occupational-related fatalities remain of great concern. The New Mexico Occupational Health Surveillance Program (NMOHSP) tracks trends for occupational injury and fatalities. In order to determine rates of fatalities among workers in New Mexico, partnerships with a variety of agencies are required to obtain data including the New Mexico Occupational Health and Safety Bureau (NM OHSB), New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration (NM WCA), the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NM DOT), the New Mexico Department of Public Safety (NM DPS), the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator (NM OMI), NM Vital Records and Health Statistics Bureau (NM VRHS) and physicians and clinics. This report presents 2013 workplace fatalities in New Mexico and comparisons with 2013 national data and 2012 state data.

Methods

In order to compile and analyze 2013 workplace fatality data, several sources were used. First, 2013 data were retrieved from the NMOHSP notifiable conditions database, which includes data from the NM OMI, the NM OHSB, and physician and clinic reports. These data include the name of the decedent, location of death, as well as the industry involved for each death. To ensure that fatalities were work-related, NMOHSP identified and verified the individual worker's occupation, nature of the event, and the equipment involved. Additionally, findings from investigations conducted by the NM OHSB can indicate if a fatality was work-related. Preliminary data for 2013 from the BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) database were also consulted, which include 'exposures' such as falls, slips, trips, transportation incidents, etc. The injury fatality rate among industries involved in transportation incidents for the United States and New Mexico was calculated by NMOHSP selecting the industries with transportation related fatalities. The denominator includes the total number of FTEs for all industries combined. The numerator is total number of transportation fatalities. The BLS CFOI substantiates data with two or more independent source documents, or a source document and a follow-up questionnaire. Because traffic crash fatalities do not fall under the NM OHSB, the NM DPS and NM DOT were approached to obtain data. These agencies investigate commercial and non-commercial vehicle fatalities, respectively. Finally, NM WCA data were consulted to determine the number of fatalities reported with a request for compensation through Workers' Compensation.

Results

In 2013, there were 54 workplace fatalities in New Mexico according to CFOI for an overall crude occupational fatality rate of 6.7 per 100,000 FTEs (ages 16 years and older), while the overall occupational fatality rate in the United States was 3.2 per 100,000 FTEs (Figure 1). CFOI found 10 additional workplace deaths than NMOHSP. Out of the 44 deaths recorded by the NMOHSP in 2013, 12 (27%) involved oil and gas work (Table 1) and 8 of these also involved transportation. Thus, the crude fatality rate in the oil and gas industry in New Mexico was 58.9 per 100,000 FTEs (ages 16 and over). In the United States in 2013, the crude fatality rate in the oil and gas industry was 19.1 per 100,000 FTEs (ages 16 and over). The resulting risk ratio comparing New Mexico's oil and gas fatality rate to the United States rate was 3.1. The calculated rate of injury fatalities among industries involved in transportation was 5.6 per 100,000 FTEs for New Mexico compared to 1.7 per 100,000 FTEs for the United States.

In 2013, NM data from CFOI indicated that there were 54 workplace fatalities compared to 39 fatalities (Table 2) reported in 2012.
Of all the injury fatalities, it is clear that truck transportation and oil and gas industry work had the highest percentages with 12 (27%) each.

The detailed line list of the fatal work injuries by oil and gas extraction illustrates how transportation can play a role in oil and gas fatalities (Table 2).

For oil and gas industry-related fatalities by occurrence and residence of the deceased, the highest number of fatalities by county of occurrence were in Eddy (8), Lea (3), Sandoval (1) counties. By county of residence, Eddy County had 7 deaths, Lea County had 2, Rio Arriba County had 1 and Texas had 2.

Workers Compensation Related Deaths
The NMWCA evaluates work-related fatalities according to established guidelines to determine if the fatalities are compensable. In 2013, there were 35 reported fatalities and of these, 10 were classified as compensable work-related fatalities. In 2012, there were 34 reported fatalities and of these, 17 were classified as compensable work-related fatalities. The rate of reported fatalities per 100,000 for 2013 was slightly higher (4.6) than the 2012 reported rate (4.5)[1].

Discussion
Occupational deaths are a significant health problem in NM with a death rate substantially greater than that of the United States. Specifically, fatalities by industry indicated that oil and gas-related and transportation were the top two high-risk industries for workplace fatality. Oil and gas fatalities occurred most frequently as a result of motor vehicle accidents (6), followed by crushing/pinning accidents (2), falls (2), struck-by-object accidents (1), and electrocutions (1). The 2013 death rate was substantially higher than that for 2012. The increase in occupational related fatalities in NM from 2012 to 2013 was largely a result of an increase in transportation-related deaths for the year.

DPS usually collects monthly transportation related crash and injury fatality data from their officers in several regions of the state. DOT on the other hand, relies heavily on their Traffic Safety Division for updated monthly fatality crash-related data. These data are classified into alcohol-involved fatalities, fatalities by residency and locations, fatalities by vehicle occupant seat belt, etc. These are not classified by occupational versus non-occupational status. Therefore, NMOHSP uses the OMI data to try and make the determination. NM BLS receives the data and makes the determination, but BLS does not share these specific data with states. NMOHSP will continue to work with the two

Table 1. Injury Fatalities by Industry, NM, 2013

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) group	Number	Oil and Gas Related
Crop Production	3	0
Animal Production	3	0
Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry	1	0
Mining (Except Oil and Gas)	1	0
Support Activities for Mining	3	3
Utilities	2	0
Construction of Buildings	4	0
Specialty Trade Contractors	4	3
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	1	1
Rail Transportation	4	0
Truck Transportation	12	5
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	1	0
Administrative and Support Services	1	0
Educational Services	2	0
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports and Related	1	0
Repair and Maintenance	1	0
Total	**44**	**12**

state partners for timely data tracking for both occupational related fatal transportation incidents and non-occupational based cases. The difference between the number of injury fatalities between CFOI (N=54) and NM OHSP (N=44) is likely due to the transportation fatalities investigated by DPS and DOT but not currently available to NMOSHP.

NMWCA reported a crude fatality rate of 4.6, which was lower than the CFOI rate of 6.7. According to the NMWCA, this is expected since not all workplace fatalities in the State are eligible for compensation because certain industries/occupational categories do not participate in the state workers compensation program. These include some real estate and rental and leasing agents, farmers and ranchers, and federal workers. Employers with fewer than 3 workers are not required to participate in the program.

Recommendations

Since New Mexico has an oil and gas fatality rate that is 3.1 times higher than the rate in the United States, the first recommendation is to bring in more partners to address the factors involved in these fatalities. There have already been preliminary conversations between NMOSHP, NMOSHA and New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (NMOGA**),** with the intent to identify opportunities for collaboration and prevention. An enhanced partnership would provide organizational, educational, and business entities an opportunity to participate in a cooperative relationship with NMOHSP for purposes such as data sharing, training/education, outreach, and promoting a state dialogue on workplace health and safety. One potential intervention would be to adopt an existing safety media campaign in oil and gas industry for a work safe New Mexico as provided by OSHA 2013 Regional News Release.[2] The second recommendation is to increase partnerships with organizations such as the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety. Both organizations collect data about transportation-related fatalities that can also be related to occupation. These partnerships will help to foster timely data sharing and co-development of interventions, such as development of safety programs to reduce occupational transportation injuries.

References

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2. United States Department of Labor. (2015). OSHA News Releases – Events. Retrieved from https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owanews_releases.level_subject?p_keyvalue=Events

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Table 2. Detailed Line List of Occupational Fatalities in Oil and Gas Extraction

Transportation Related Fatalities	Non Transportation Related Fatalities
• Male truck driver fell from the truck when struck by an object. • Two male truck drivers had head on collision with other trucks in separate incidents. • Male driver died while operating oil well equipment. • Male transport worker was pinned between a truck and a piece of machinery. • Three male oil field workers died in separate transportation accidents due to blunt trauma	• Two male oil field workers fell from platforms in separate incidents. • Male decedent was struck by a large roll of pipe. • Male crew was electrocuted while operating an oil boom.

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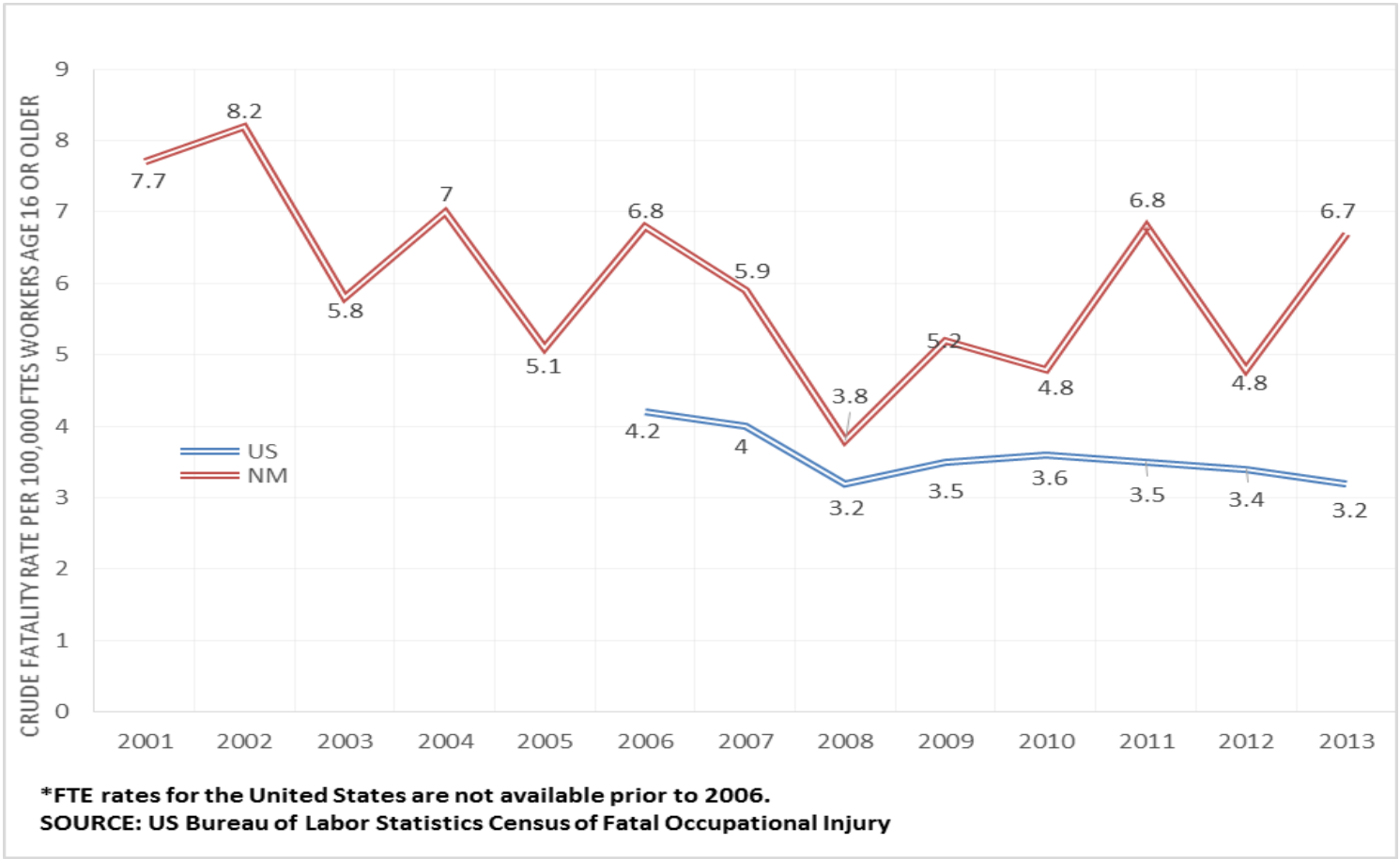
Figure 1. Occupational Injury Fatality Rates, NM and US, 2001-2013



***FTE rates for the United States are not available prior to 2006.**
SOURCE: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injury