

Profile of construction accidents in Sri Lanka

R Rameezdeen, U Tennakoon and C P Pathirage

Department of Building Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Moratuwa, Moratuwa

Accidents are unplanned and uncontrolled events and in terms of operational probability is a class of events which incurs at low level of expectancy, avoidability and intention. Research done in other countries show construction as an unsafe industry. Construction worker injuries have broad and adverse impacts on the ultimate output of the industry. A detail evaluation and a critical analysis of accidents in the construction industry are of immense importance. This paper intends to provide a profile of construction accidents in Sri Lanka by which accident prevention programmes can be made more effective.

The background to this research work was obtained through a comprehensive literature survey and a series of unstructured interviews. The study used secondary data analysis methodology for the accident data recorded by the Industrial Safety Division (ISD) of Ministry of Labour. According to the Factory Ordinance of Sri Lanka (Ordinance No 45, 1982 as amended) the employer should report every accident that have resulted workers to be absent from work for more than three days, to the relevant District Factory Inspecting Engineer within ten days after the injured worker resumes his employment.

The profile of construction accidents in Sri Lanka was established based on the severity, causes, position and the timing of the accident. The number of fatal accidents per rupees one billion of output for construction industry is significantly high even when compared with the combined total of all other industries. On average, 89% of fatal accidents and 47% of non fatal accidents occur in the construction sites.

It was revealed that the largest amount of fatal accidents in construction industry has occurred as a result of fall of workers (42%) followed by electrocution (22%). Largest amount of non-fatal accidents has occurred due to struck-by falling objects (45%). The data related to position of injury revealed that majority of fatal accidents results injuries to head and neck area (31%), whereas non-fatal accidents to hands (27%) and legs (19%). The frequency of accidents seems to be quite high during the time periods 10-12 a.m. and 2-4 p.m.

In view of obtaining a clear picture of workers who often meet with accidents, the occupation/ trade and the age group of the victims were considered. The unskilled workers seem to be the most vulnerable occupation group for both fatal and non fatal accidents, which has recorded 59% and 73% respectively, over and above their cohort representation (50.4%). Another feature that can be noticed from the analysis is the low occurrence of accidents in the trades like masonry, carpentry and electrical. The largest number of fatal accidents has been recorded from the age group of 30-35 while non-fatal accidents from the age group of 25-30.

rameez@mail.ac.lk

Tel: 011 2650301

Ext: 7209