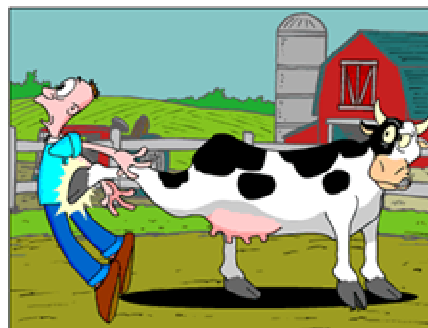


## Dramatic Increase in the Number of Workplace Fatalities

With workplace deaths up almost 25% in 2005, the HSA chief executive Tom Beegan expressed his "deep concern" and implored the country's worst safety offenders to "face up to the safety issues". It is a fact that the risk of a serious accident occurring in a company employing less than 50 people is roughly double that for larger businesses. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are responsible for 82% of all occupational injuries and 90% of fatal accidents in Europe. 87% of companies in Ireland employ less than 50 people. In its research, the HSA has found that up to a half of these employers do not do enough to ensure a safe workplace.



### Irish Fatalities 2005

#### Reported Fatalities to date in 2005 (as at 4th November)

Economic Sector	Number of Cases
A. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting	15
B. Fishing	0
C. Mining, Quarrying	6
D. Manufacturing	8
E. Electricity, Gas, Water	0
F. Construction	18
G. Wholesale, Retail, Repair	7
H. Hotels, Restaurants	0
I. Transport, Storage, Communication	4
J. Financial Intermediation	0
K. Real Estate, Renting, Business	1
L. Public Administration, Defence	2
M. Education	0
N. Health, Social Work	0
Community, Social, Personal Services	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

The HSA chief executive Tom Beegan has described the number of fatalities in 2005, particularly amongst non-national workers, as worrying. Eight of those killed in 2005 were non-national workers. It now seems inevitable that in the near future a company will be facing prosecution with regard to the new training clause in our 2005 Safety Health and Welfare at work Act. The Act states that an employer has a duty to provide information, training, instruction and supervision in a form, manner and language which employees are reasonably likely to understand. Training must be given on recruitment, on transfer or change of task and when new equipment, systems of work and technology are introduced. The Act also imposes new obligations on employees to attend training.



A very alarming fact that is often not considered is that the true level of occupational fatalities in Ireland is probably much higher. According to SIPTU's Health and Safety Officer, Sylvester Cronin, the real figure could be up to ten times higher than reported. We must remember that the HSA only collates data on the number of illnesses or injuries occurring in the workplace, and that these figures do not reflect the true level of occupational fatalities e.g. those killed in road traffic accidents - who are driving as part of their normal work - are not included in occupational fatality statistics and there is evidence that up to one-third of all road accidents are work related. It is also estimated that around 4% of cancer deaths are work-related, that is an average of 7500 people annually. So it would be fair to say that another 300 deaths could be related to occupational causes. Mr. Cronin also states that if there was investigation into the number of cardio-vascular or respiratory illnesses contracted at work which led to fatalities outside the workplace, the figure would again increase, considering that Ireland has one of the highest mortality rates of respiratory disease in Europe. We must therefore accept that the published figures are not a true and accurate reflection of occupational fatalities each year.

