



**ICAM
Australia**
Global Services & Expertise

WHS Trends And Investigation Learnings: Lessons For Leaders

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Introduction

What We Do At ICAM Australia

- Investigate high potential incidents at high-risk workplaces
- Teach people how to carry out ICAM investigations

What The Webinar Will Cover

- Trends and changes in the safety industry with actionable learnings.
- How these changes and themes show up in incident investigations.



Injury Data - Where Do We Stand?

Worker Fatality stats

200
worker fatalities

1.4
deaths per
100,000 workers


19%
decrease in fatality
rate since 2013

Worker Fatalities - Occupation



Machinery operators and drivers

8.3
fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Labourers

4.4
fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Technicians and trades workers

1.4
fatalities per 100,000 workers.

Worker Fatalities - Industry



Agriculture, forestry and fishing

9.2
fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Transport, postal and
warehousing

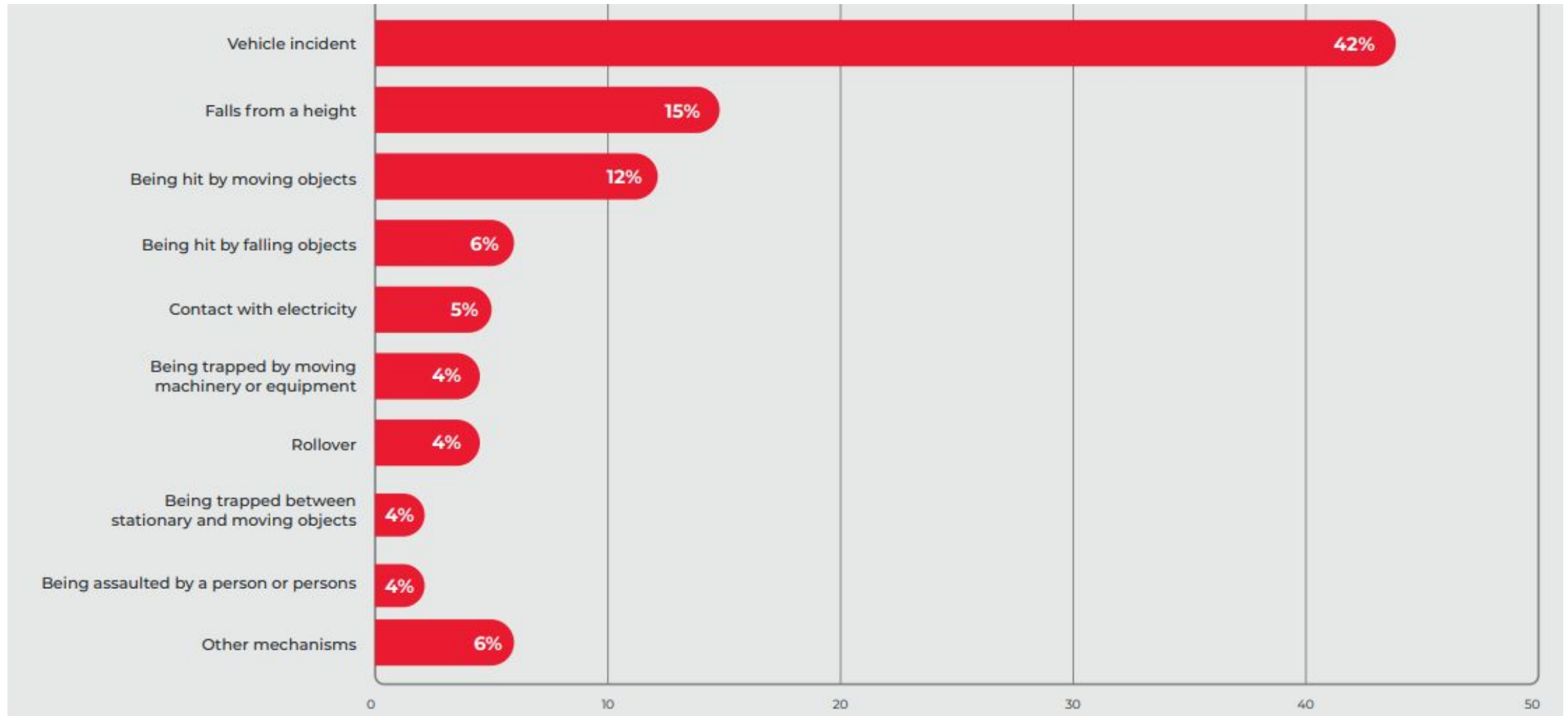
7.0
fatalities per 100,000 workers.



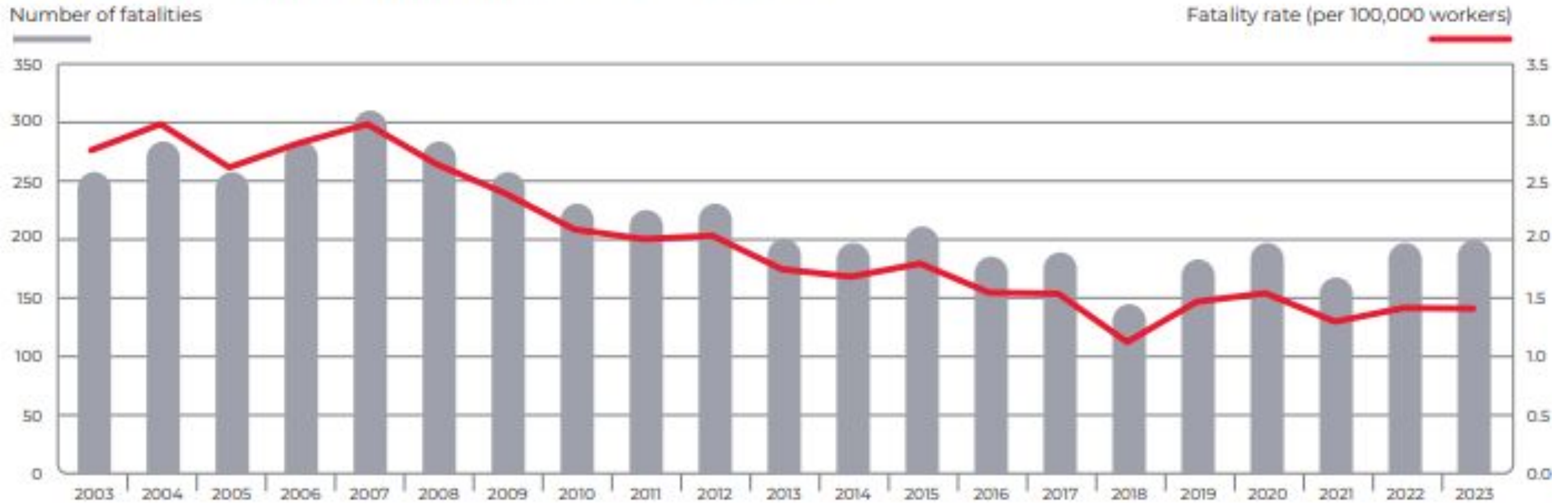
Construction

3.4
fatalities per 100,000 workers.

Fatalities by mechanism 2023



Trends In Worker Fatalities 2003-2023



Why Is This Still Happening?

Cultural changes, distractions, particularly among younger workers?

Not what the data shows

Changes in workforce dynamics with people increasingly switching industries?

Over reliance on systems and a lack of focus on human factors in system design?

Worker fatalities by age group, 2023*

| Age group | Fatalities | Fatality rate (per 100,000 workers) |
|-------------|------------|--|
| Under 25 | 27 | 1.2 |
| 25-34 | 29 | 0.9 |
| 35-44 | 35 | 1.1 |
| 45-54 | 38 | 1.4 |
| 55-64 | 40 | 1.9 |
| 65 and over | 27 | 3.9 |



From our experience in investigations these are key factors.

Mental Health Is A Growing Trend

1. Mental health conditions accounted for 10.5% of claims in 2022-23p.
2. Mental Health claims have seen a 19.2% increase on 2021-22, and a 97.3% increase compared with 10 years ago.
3. The average cost of a mental health claim is over 3x that of the average for all claims (\$65,402 vs \$20,701)
4. The Average lost time for mental health is almost 4x that of the average for all claims (37 weeks vs 9.6 weeks)

Why?

Mental Health Is A Growing Trend

Cultural awareness of the issue, particularly post COVID.



Regulatory changes and education focus.

New codes of practice and awareness campaigns.



Increased awareness and claiming by workers.

Increased awareness and checking by workers compensation.

How Do We Prevent This?

Most organisations have Policies & Procedures around bullying and harassment, Employee Support Programs, mental health days, Flexible Leave Policies etc.

Why Are These Not Working?

It Comes Down To Leadership and Culture

How it Happens

- Leaders create the culture through their actions, or lack of actions.
- Workers operate in an organisation with cultural rules.
- If the culture doesn't support the action leaders need to take, workers are unlikely to feel safe and take the correct action.
- Results in a poor culture where the processes in place fall down.

Example

Leader fails to consistently respond to a worker's hazard notifications.



Worker eventually stops reporting hazards and risks.



Worker identifies an unsafe situation on site but does not report as the manager.



The unsafe situation results in an incident because it was not addressed.

Part 2 - How These Trends Show Up In The Workplace

What do you think is the most common thing we hear from workers when investigating workplace incidents?

“I knew that was going to happen one day!”

What does this tell us?

People aren't reporting.

Why People Aren't Reporting

What holds people back from reporting?

- Fear; of reporting, reprimand, negative outcomes in general.
- Lack of understanding and knowledge about what to report.
- Misaligned incentives
- Lack of trust in management
- Inefficient reporting processes
- Lack of outcomes from previous reports (perceived or actual)



What This Looks Like In Reality

Incident: Large rock fall onto active quarry road.

Initial findings: Heavy rain eroded soil around rock leading to fall.

Rain event blamed as the main contributing factor.

Does this sound reasonable to you?

Hopefully not. Where does management come into this?

Why did this happen?



Digging A Little Deeper

We spoke to employees during the investigation and this is what we got:

“I knew this was going to happen, we’ve had a few minor rock falls; but nothing has changed.”

“I lost track of how many times I’ve asked about geotechnical surveys. I haven’t seen one in my 18 months here. I stopped asking in the end.”

“It was a matter of time, the catch bunds are a key control for falling rocks but have been full for ages and inspections haven’t been done. We knew no one was maintaining them.”

Think about investigations in your workplace, do these sound familiar?

Why Did The Rock Fall?

In short, poor management and systems that did not take into account how humans actually work.

Contributing Factors

Underlying Reasons

| | |
|---|--|
| Inexperienced workers did not understand the processes and systems in the organisation. Particularly daily inspections and Geotech surveys. | HSE advisor in role for 6 weeks. Just got Cert IV, no industry experience. Poor onboarding and handover. |
| Geotech surveys not completed to assess wall stability. | 18 months overdue. Multiple requests ignored. |
| Change of haul truck route without consideration of unsurveyed walls above new route. | Raised in conversation and meetings 4 weeks prior but not looked into. |
| Previously active process of daily and weekly wall inspections not active. | This was raised in multiple meetings before going quiet. |
| Workers not reporting hazards due to a lack of action from previous reports. | Lots of examples of hazards reported with no action. |

What Went Wrong

Lack of experience, poor reporting & communication practices



Degraded reporting culture & trust in management



Unreported hazards & risks



Incident occurred from known & preventable hazards

What Can We Do About This?

1. The right leaders with the right skills, leading by example. This needs to be consistent.
2. Keep workers informed. If a report is made, close the loop by keeping them informed.
3. Sometimes doing small, seemingly low priority things is worth it to repair trust and build a culture of psychological safety.
4. Look at your processes and make them as simple as possible. Complex systems deter people from using them.
5. Human and Operational Performance (HOP) Principles can help here.
6. Take a safety culture survey.

