AN OVERVIEW OF CONSTRUCTION INJURIES AND FATALITIES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Adnan ENSHASSI¹, John SMALLWOOD² and Ahmed HASSOUNA³

¹ Civil Engineering Department, IUG, Palestine
² Department of Construction Management, University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa
³ Trust International Insurance Co., Gaza, Palestine

Abstract

Construction injuries and fatalities in the Gaza Strip are numerous when compared to other industries and with construction in other countries. The study of construction injuries has drawn attention to the magnitude and distribution of construction injuries, reinforcing the need to increase efforts relative to safety and in particular, accident prevention. Falls from heights, slipping and tripping, being struck by a moving object, and caught in/between incidents, are the most common causes of accidents. The objective of this paper is to study the rates of construction fatalities and injuries, and to determine the distribution of the causes of construction accidents in the Gaza Strip. A comparison between fatality rates, injury rates, and the distribution of the causes of injuries in the construction industry in the Gaza Strip has been made with the selected countries Israel, Hong Kong, the EU and the USA. The study indicates that 31% of workers who died in the Gaza Strip were working in construction whereas 69% of those who died were working in other industries. The predominating causes of fatalities and injuries in the Gaza Strip are falls and being struck by another object or machine. It is recommended that the Ministry of Labour should increase the frequency of safety inspections and safety visits to sites and conduct safety-training courses for construction professionals. Developing a safety culture among all employees in construction is the responsibility of the Ministry and also all those involved in the field of construction. The Ministry of Labour and all contractors should maintain records of injuries and use such records and resultant accident statistics to improve their work processes.

Key Words

Construction, safety, injury experience, comparison, performance.

INTRODUCTION

A poor safety standard is one of the most difficult issues facing the construction industry in the Gaza Strip. The accident rate in construction is the highest when compared with that for other industries. Accident statistics have remained reasonably constant over the past six years; the construction industry generally accounting for nearly 20% of all industrial injuries (Ministry of Labour, 2004). Construction work differs from that in other industries in that the workers are continuously confronted with new challenges, and new hazards and risks develop as their work progresses. Consequently, in theory, the level of attention to safety should be higher than it is in most other industries. Furthermore, in the typical industrial setting, workers are exposed to the same environment and hazards every day. In contrast, a construction worker may work for more than five different employers in one year at a dozen or more different sites, and even on the one site, the environment changes within time.

The creation and maintenance of a safety culture begins at the top, and if it is optimum, it will manifest itself at worker level. Furthermore, safety performance on a project is just as much a