

FIG 1-7b—Since 1933, death rates per 100,000 workers were at their highest for manufacturing in 1936 and for nonmanufacturing in 1937. Since those years, both rates decreased more than 50 percent and reached their lowest levels in the past five years. These lower rates resulted from deaths declining about one-fourth, and increased numbers of workers.

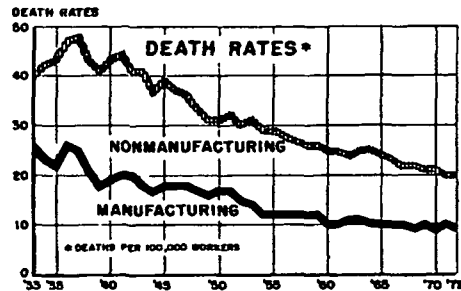
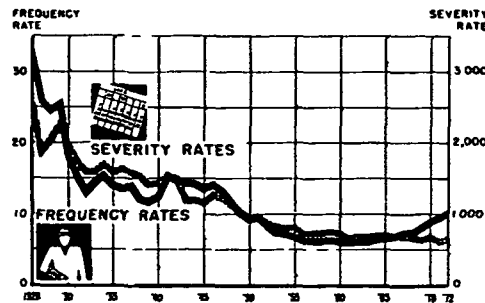


FIG 1-7c—The injury frequency rate of NSC reporters declined rapidly to 1932, increased in World War II, then reached a record low in 1962. The 67% increase to 10.17 in 1972 from the 6.10 average of 1961-63 would have been only 37% to 8.36 if 1972 industry representation had been the same as 1961-63.

The severity rate followed a similar pattern. The 1972 decline of 4% from 1961-63 was not affected by changes in industry representation.



Safety professionals, unlike designers of a new piece of machinery, cannot look philosophically upon errors and breakdowns in the experimental stage. Since they deal with human lives, human health, and immediate efficiency and productivity, safety professionals must deal with today's problems today.

On the other hand, they cannot be content to run from emergency to emergency. They must consider the long-term effects of their work—the increase of knowledge, the improvement of techniques, the development of organizational forms which will serve them well next year and for many years to come.

Since the factors are complex, no simple rating scale can indicate an answer to the question, "What has the safety movement accomplished?" In the absence of such a rating scale, an attempt to answer the question must be made by assembling several kinds of data.

Statistical evaluation

First, the question must be asked, "Has the safety movement, in fact, done anything in the past to prevent accidents?" To that question can be answered a clear "Yes!"

If the annual accidental death rate per thousand of population which held in 1912 had continued, there would have been over 1.5 million more accidental deaths than actually occurred. Since 1912, the death rate for persons of normal working age—25 to 64 years—declined more than 67 percent while the rate of all ages of the entire population declined only half that much. Medical progress accounts for some of this gain, but the larger part is certainly the product of organized safety work.

The work accident figures probably understate the progress made in industrial safety,