

INDUSTRIAL INJURY RATES HAVE ALSO DECREASED

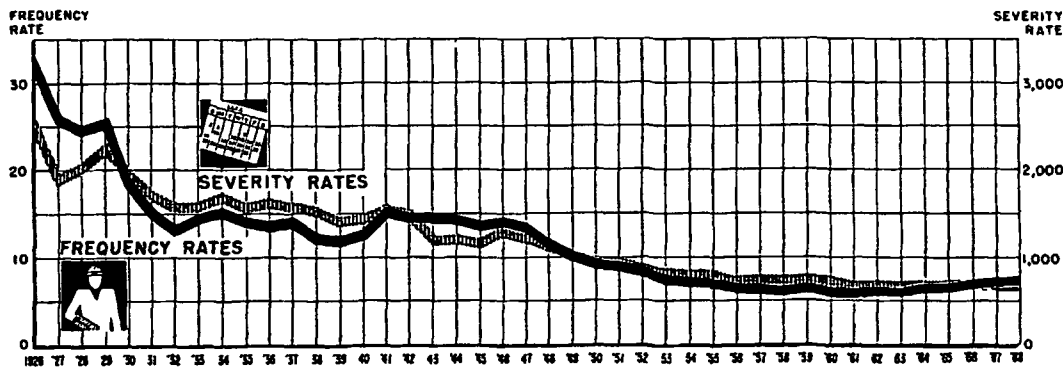


FIG 1-7 —The average American today has a better chance of avoiding accidental death than did the American of 20 or 40 years ago. Left chart, based on figures for the entire country, shows number of deaths is down even though number of workers is up. Chart above, based on figures of companies reporting to the National Safety Council, shows both the frequency and severity of industrial accidents to be down, in general, even though industrial production has increased.

a national scale are quite different from the objectives in designing a safety program on a company or plant scale.

The first objective of a company or plant safety program is immediate and urgent—to prevent the accident which might happen in the next minute or the next hour or the next day, week, or month.

Safety men, 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 men 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 to prevent accidents in the past?" To that question can be answered a clear "Yes!"

If the annual accidental death rate per thousand of population which held from 1900 to 1912 had continued through 1968, there would have been over 13 million more accidental deaths than actually occurred. Medical progress accounts for some of this gain, but the larger part is certainly the product of organized safety work.

It is worth noting that though death rates for the entire population—that is, for all ages—from 1912 to 1968 declined 30 per cent, the death rate for persons of normal working age—25 to 64 years—declined more than 40 per cent.

Work accident death data do not antedate