

Industrial Safety

1928, but even since that date, there has been a 67 per cent decline in the death rate from work accidents. In fact, despite a tremendous increase in the labor force, there has been a reduction of several thousand in the total number of yearly deaths from work accidents.

The work accident figures probably understate the progress made in industrial safety, for they include a very large number of non-industrial work deaths. Farm work, trades, services, and government accounted for more than half the accidental work deaths in 1968. The remaining 7000 deaths occurred in manufacturing, public utilities, transportation, construction, and the extractive industries (mining, quarrying, and gas and oil wells).

Overall frequency and severity rates for industry are not available, but figures on the experience of concerns reporting to the National Safety Council provide a dramatic summary of the progress of organized safety work in the nation. From 1926 to 1967, reporting firms experienced a decline in the frequency rate for all disabilities from 31.87 to 7.22.

Though these figures represent only companies involved in the work of the organized safety movement, they cannot be dismissed as representing a handful of firms with an exceptionally high level of safety enthusiasm. The 1967 figures are based on reports from 10,161 units. These units were principally manufacturing concerns, which accounted for about one-third of the total number of manufacturing man-hours worked in America.

It would be fair, perhaps, to call these figures representative of large-plant experience in this country, since the Council receives the majority of its reports from large concerns and only a minority from small ones.

Safetymen cannot afford to underestimate the significance of the statistical data on their past performance. It is abundantly clear that the bitter problem confronting the safety pioneers of 1913 has been attacked with amazing success. However, the job is probably only half finished so progress is still being made. This is shown by latest available data.

The dollar values

It has been estimated that occupational accidents cost the United States over \$7.4 billion in 1968. If the 1912 accident rates had

been left unchanged and if there had been no organized safety movement, this annual cost might have been two or three times as great.

Against such dollar savings, the relatively small expenditures for safety throughout America provide a striking contrast. Each dollar spent for safety by American industry is actually producing a clear profit of several hundred per cent.

Industry and nonwork accidents

Directly and indirectly, industry is bearing a substantial part of the burden of preventing nonwork accidents. The National Safety Council is the creation of industry and largely supported by it. Statewide and local safety organizations play a major role in the fight against such accidents, and they, too, are largely industrial in origin and support.

Industry supports a large part of the job of informing the general public on these problems through the press, radio, and television.

The effectiveness of the nonwork accident-prevention campaign is shown by the fact that, from the time records were first kept in 1928, both home and public accident death totals (excluding motor vehicle accidents) have declined, despite great increases in population.

If industry has been a large contributor to this successful work, it has also been a heavy beneficiary of its fruits. Disruption of labor force, worry and hardship among employees, loss of purchasing power by consumers, and heavy tax burdens for the support of hospitals and relief agencies are all results of nonwork accidents which affect industry's pocketbook.

Industry and school safety

One reason that industry is interested in school safety is that the student who is unsafe at school is going to be unsafe on a job.

Unless he has received a thorough background in safety principles during his school years, a person will not have a solid basis on which industry can build a framework for on-the-job safety. On the other hand, if the student has a basic understanding of safety principles, if he has been taught that it's not the right way if it isn't safe, if he has been helped to develop responsibility toward the well-being of others, then industry has a firm base on which to build specific safety habits and techniques.