

ACCIDENTS AND PREVENTION

- 203 Cause and Prevention of Accidents. C. L. Wilbar, Jr.
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In Pennsylvania, accidents have been the fourth leading cause of death since 1900 and remain firmly established in this position. In the early part of the century, they were preceded by infectious diseases. Now they are preceded by heart disease, cancer, and vascular lesions of the central nervous system. In 1958, 5,056 Pennsylvanians were accident killed. The death rate from accidents per 100,000 population in that year was 16.2 for motor vehicle accidents and 29.3 for non-traffic accidents. Accidents are prevented by first locating the causes. After having ascertained the causes, steps are then taken to either correct or modify the environmental hazard or to change the attitudes and habits of the people involved or both. The Pennsylvania Department of Health through its section of environmental safety is engaged in a survey of the types of accidents that bring people to hospitals. Information on non-fatal injuries is gathered from 100 hospitals reporting accidental injuries treated to the health department. They show a difference compared to data on types of fatal accidents experienced. There is a higher rate of injuries from non-fatal falls in the middle years of life, but a higher rate of fatal falls in the early and late years. Cuts and piercing injuries seldom prove fatal, yet there are indications that these may be the major forms of non-fatal accidental injuries. Most non-traffic accidents occur in the home, where the population spends more time than elsewhere. Most fatal injuries occur to persons in the very young or very old age groups, whereas most non-fatal accidents occur in the age group 15 through 24 years. Males have a much higher accident rate than females. Non-whites have a much higher rate than whites. Physical shortcomings which interfere with coordination, balance, and locomotion obviously predispose individuals having these shortcomings to accidents. So do certain visual and auditory abnormalities and conditions, which prevent the individual from having mental control of his activities such as fainting, convulsions, heart attacks, cerebral hemorrhage, and such.

- 204 Too Hazardous for Minors Under 18. Hazardous-Occupations Orders Issued for Power Saw Guillotines, Demolition and Shipbreaking. Anon. Safety Standards 10, 24-25 (Jan.-Feb. 1961).

The Secretary of Labor issued recently 2 new hazardous-occupations orders setting an 18-year age minimum for employment in certain occupations. Hazardous-Occupations Order No. 14 applies to the operation and maintenance of power-driven circular saws, band saws, and guillotine shears; H. O. Order No. 15 covers all occupations at the site of wrecking, demolition, and shipbreaking operations. Both Orders became effective November 15, 1960. The Orders were based upon reports of extensive investigations made by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Standards and reviewed by an outside committee of technical experts. At public hearings held September 14, no opposition was expressed. The Bureau's investigators found that power saws and shears are too hazardous for young workers regardless of the material being processed, a thought unanimously concurred in by various safety experts interviewed. Their findings cite numerous injuries to 16- and 17-year old operators of such machines, including multiple amputations of fingers, fractures, and severe lacerations of fingers and hands, showing that safe operation of this equipment requires "caution, good judgment and skill", characteristics that 16- and 17-year-olds often lack. Wrecking and demolition hazards, according to Bureau investigators, include those of operating a wide variety of power equipment, falls from different levels, being struck by falling objects and by swing loads, collapse of floors and walls, high voltage dangers, fire, explosions, handling heavy materials, and infection from puncture wounds. Hazards in shipbreaking are much the same with added serious danger from toxic fumes while cutting metals in confined spaces, and from the use of power shearing machines.