



National Occupational Health  
and Safety Advisory Committee  
*Komiti Tōhutohū Mahi Ā-Motu Hauora me te Haumanu*

## News Release

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### **The Surveillance of Occupational Disease and Injury in New Zealand: Report to the Minister of Labour**

A report released today by the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee (NOHSAC) reports that the systems used for the surveillance of occupational disease and injury in New Zealand fall far short of internationally accepted practice, especially for the surveillance of occupational disease.

Chair of the Committee, Professor Neil Pearce from Massey University's Centre for Public Health Research says that "it is unacceptable that the various agencies responsible for occupational safety and health in the workplace are unable to accurately measure how many New Zealanders are dying or being seriously injured at work, or the main causes and circumstances of the deaths and serious injury, and therefore have no effective strategies to reduce the death and injury rate".

Professor Pearce notes that this situation is not new and that New Zealand has had to rely on one off surveys and incomplete data sets to estimate the true incidence of occupational disease and injury. The report finds that the data currently used suffers from

- a lack of common definitions and coding of occupation
- a lack of common definitions and coding of disease and injury
- poor capture of occupational history particularly in relation to occupational disease
- inadequate or nonexistent coding of the occupational history information that is collected
- lack of expertise and resources to manage and administer systems, particularly within the Department of Labour
- the lack of anyone "in charge" who can take responsibility for collecting, coding, analysing, and publishing information on the annual burden of occupational disease and injury.

The report contains recommendations for improving the quality of data collected from the various sources and agencies and provides an integrated

model for the surveillance of occupational disease and injury in line with international best practice

The Committee was established in 2003 and its role is to provide the Minister of Labour with independent, contestable advice on major occupational health and safety issues. The other members include Dr Evan Dryson (Occupational Medicine Specialist), Dr Anne-Marie Feyer (PricewaterhouseCoopers, Sydney), Professor Philippa Gander (Massey University) and Mr Selwyn McCracken (University of Otago).

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