

Dangerous Work

Crashes and homicides determine which jobs are the most perilous in Florida.



The bad news about workplace fatalities in Florida is that the 362 deaths on the job in 2007 was about the same number as in 2006 — even as employment levels decreased and as work-related deaths nationwide dropped by about 6%.

The good news is that the chance of dying on the job in Florida is still small. In 2007, Florida's workplace death rate was 4.6 per 100,000 workers. The national rate is 3.7 per 100,000 workers, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The majority of those killed in on-the-job accidents were men: 329 vs. 33 women. Only 42 of those killed were self-employed. The rest were hourly or salaried employees. Overall, the typical person who died on the job in Florida in 2007 was a 50-year-old white male truck driver earning around \$30,000 a year who died in a traffic accident.

Following is a list of the jobs with the most fatalities:

☛ Deaths on the Job

- 1 > **Driver/sales workers and truck drivers**
Deaths: 43
Mean Wage: \$29,266

- 2 > **Construction laborers**
Deaths: 29
Mean Wage: \$24,250

- 3 > **Grounds maintenance workers**
Deaths: 21
Mean Wage: \$28,220

- 4 > **Police officers, deputies**
Deaths: 16
Mean Wage: \$49,420
Dangers: Seven officers were gunned down in 2007. Two others were victims of vehicular assault; three were struck by vehicles; two died in automobile accidents; one died during a vehicle pursuit; and another in an ATV accident.

- 5 > **First-line supervisors / managers, sales workers**
Deaths: 13
Mean Wage: \$43,470 (retail), \$73,760 (non-retail)

- 6 > **Laborers and material movers**
Deaths: 11
Mean Wage: \$22,470

- 7 > **Electricians**
Deaths: 11
Mean Wage: \$37,730

- 8 > **Building cleaning workers**
(includes janitors, maids, window washers)
Deaths: 11
Mean Wage: \$27,550

- 9 > **Roofers**
Deaths: 9
Mean Wage: \$31,340
Dangers: In 2005, the rate of injuries for roofing contractors in the United States was almost twice that of workers overall.

- 10 > **Agricultural workers**
(farming, fishing and forestry occupations)
Deaths: 9
Mean Wage: \$20,820



➔ Homicides at Work

Work-related homicides in Florida:

| Year | Homicides | Homicides via Shooting |
|------|-----------|------------------------|
| 2003 | 43 | 32 |
| 2004 | 46 | 35 |
| 2005 | 37 | 35 |
| 2006 | 41 | 36 |
| 2007 | 60 | 51 |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

➔ States with the Most Workplace Fatalities

| State | Deaths |
|---------------|--------|
| 1. Texas | 527 |
| 2. California | 407 |
| 3. Florida | 362 |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

➔ Fatal Occupational Injuries in Florida

(Public vs. Private Industry)

35 public employees died on the job in 2007, including 25 who worked in local government and six in state government. Seventeen of the 35 worked in transportation areas.

| Year | All Sectors | Private Industry | Govt. |
|------|-------------|------------------|-------|
| 2003 | 347 | 324 | 23 |
| 2004 | 422 | 390 | 32 |
| 2005 | 406 | 380 | 26 |
| 2006 | 360 | 330 | 30 |
| 2007 | 362 | 327 | 35 |


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

➔ Causes of Death

Car accidents, gunshots and falls accounted for most on-the-job deaths in 2007.

- Transportation incidents killed 136 Florida workers in 2007 — more than a third of those who died that year.
- Workplace homicides — which were up 13% nationally — rose by 46% in Florida in 2007. The majority, 85%, involved shootings. Three resulted from stabbings and five from other types of assaults. The victims included police officers, restaurant workers, sales workers and others. The 610 workplace homicides nationally came after a low of 540 in 2006, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The killings included the shooting of Jonathan Foy during an attempted robbery of a BP gas station in Tallahassee. Among others killed on the job that year were Sgt. Ron Harrison, a 27-year veteran of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office who was gunned down while sitting in his patrol car after conducting a DUI checkpoint in Brandon.

- Falls accounted for 62 of the 362 deaths in 2007, making them the third-highest cause of occupational fatalities in the state that year. A wide range of workers — from roofers to cleaning personnel to construction laborers to agricultural workers — died from falls. On Nov. 24, 2007, Karen Price, a 63-year-old ride attendant at Disney's Animal Kingdom, was assisting passengers on the loading dock of a spinning roller coaster ride called the Primeval Whirl when one of the coaster's cars hit her and knocked her to the ground, where she hit her head. Price died five days later.

- The remaining worker deaths in the state were attributed to contact with objects and equipment (45), exposure to harmful substances of environments (42), suicides (10) and fires or explosion (5). Two deaths were in categories not listed. 

FloridaTrend.com/Extra 

Changes recommended to Florida's worker safety laws come under fire.