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## **JULY SURGE IN VIRGINIA WORKPLACE FATALITIES**

**RICHMOND, VA** – Commissioner C. Ray Davenport urges greater employer and worker vigilance on occupational safety and health protections after seven Virginia workers have died of job-related injuries and illnesses in the month of July. A total of 19 workplace fatalities have been investigated by the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) program so far this year. In calendar year 2016, the 42 fatalities experienced was a significant 35% increase in fatal accidents over 2015 and 2014 when 31 employees were killed on the job both years.

"For the second year in a row, there has been a surge in workplace fatalities in July. Seven Virginia workers have lost their lives in workplace accidents versus eight in July, 2016, devastating families, friends, co-workers and businesses", said Commissioner Davenport. "I strongly encourage Virginia's employers and workers to become familiar with and comply with Virginia's occupational safety and health laws and regulations".

The Virginia Department of Labor and Industry's VOSH program is urging Virginia employers to carefully review injury and illness prevention programs and their work place safety and health procedures with their employees to reduce this tragic trend.

Nearly three quarters of all workplace fatalities in Virginia occurred in general industry (manufacturing, logging, etc.) in 2016. Construction companies totaled the most fatal accidents by industry in 2014. Construction industry deaths declined from 2014 to 2015, from 15 to 11 respectively. In 2016, 11 of the 42 fatalities occurred in the construction industry. The agricultural industry, including tree trimming operations, typically accounts for five percent or fewer of all the workplace fatalities in Virginia. Males consistently make up the majority of workplace victims.

Of the 19 fatalities so far in 2017, VOSH's fatality investigations have included:

- January 28: A 39 year old male was working on residential construction site involved in gutter and roofing work when he apparently fell from a height of up to 27 feet. Falls made up almost 20 percent of the 42 work related fatalities in 2016 in Virginia. Falls were also the number one cause of workplace fatalities in Virginia in 2015. More information on fall protection issues can be located on OSHA's Fall Protection page by clicking [here](#).
- June 6: A 51 year old male was "topping" a tree when he was struck by a large branch after making a cut with his chainsaw. More information about tree trimming hazards can be located on DOLI's Tree Trimming Operations page by clicking [here](#).
- July 6: A 62 year old male city employee was electrocuted when he contacted an overhead high voltage line while responding to a "lights out" call from city residents. He came in contact with a 7200 volt energized line while elevated in the bucket of an aerial lift. More information on overhead high voltage line safety requirements can be located on the Code of Virginia's page by clicking [here](#). More information on aerial lift safety can be located on OSHA's Aerial Lifts page by clicking [here](#).
- July 15: A 55 year old male was electrocuted in a school building when he contacted an energized circuit while working from a ladder on lighting circuits located above a grid drop ceiling. More information on electrical safety requirements can be located on OSHA's Electrical page by clicking [here](#).

Immediate steps that can be taken by employers and workers to avoid workplace injuries and illnesses include:

- ✓ Conducting a safety and health "stand down" meeting and encourage discussion on recognizing and correcting hazards in the workplace.
- ✓ Pledging to work together with front line employees as a team to make the workplace a safer, healthier and happier place to work.
- ✓ Establishing and implementing a safety and health program for the work site with full employee involvement.
- ✓ Encouraging accident prevention and the reporting of hazards and injuries in the workplace.

Many times minor injuries go unreported and more severe injuries result later on as a result of an uncorrected hazard in the workplace.

- ✓ Increasing attention toward the safety of vulnerable workers such as temporary workers or those who are not fluent in English.
- ✓ VOSH offers free On-Site Consultation Services to help small businesses better understand and voluntarily comply with VOSH standards. Priority is given to high hazard workplaces with 250 or fewer employees. Additional information about On-Site Consultation Services can be obtained by contacting the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry office closest to you at [www.doli.virginia.gov](http://www.doli.virginia.gov) or by contacting Dennis Edwards, Consultation Program Manager at (804) 786-8707 or [Dennis.Edwards@doli.virginia.gov](mailto:Dennis.Edwards@doli.virginia.gov).

Additional safety and health information can be located by clicking on the topics below:

- [RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAMS](#)
- [TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS](#)
- [HAZARD IDENTIFICATION](#)
- [ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO SMALL BUSINESSES](#)
- [THE 10 MOST FREQUENTLY CITED STANDARDS FOR GENERAL INDUSTRY AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY](#)
- [BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES AND ILLNESESS](#)

More information on REPORTING workplace fatalities (within 8 hours) and severe work-related injuries - defined as a hospitalization, amputation or loss of an eye (within 24 hours) - can be located on OSHA's fatality report page by clicking [here](#). Fatalities and severe injuries can also be reported through OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742), or a local [DOLI regional office](#).

Workplace fatality victims are exposed to some of the most frequently cited OSHA hazards such as falls, struck-by, and electrocution. In Virginia, employers are required to follow all federal OSHA identical standards as well as State specific standards which are available on DOLI's Virginia Unique Standards page by clicking [here](#).

A MEDIA PACKET is available on DOLI's website by clicking [here](#).

The Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) program is financed with 50% federal funds and 50% state funds in the form of a grant from the U. S. Department of Labor – OSHA, under §23(g); 90% federal funds and 10% state funds under §21(d) for private sector consultation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act).

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