Asphalt Worker Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Asphalt is derived from crude oil. Exposure to asphalt fumes can cause headaches, skin rashes, sensitization, fatigue, reduced appetite, throat and eye irritation, cough, and skin cancer.
2. Two main hazards associated with working with asphalt are fires and explosions and inhalation of the substance’s fumes.
3. Work in the asphalt industry in the USA has been associated with increased risk of fatal industrial and/or road accidents, but not with deaths due to any other external causes (for example, suicide, road accidents, poisoning, violence).
4. For paving operators working in the highway or road context, a common cause of accidents was being hit by paving or construction equipment, or by other vehicles that inadvertently enter the construction zone.
5. A number of different forms of human error can lead to fatal occupational injuries for paving operators, including carelessness, fatigue, being distracted, or drugs and alcohol.

STATS

- Millions of tons of asphalt are produced and used in the paving and roofing industries every year, the Texas Department of Insurance Division of Workers’ Compensation notes, and more than 500,000 workers are exposed to fumes from asphalt.
- The average fatal injury rate was 3.5 per 100,000 workers for the average job, while the rate was 46.7 per 100,000 workers for paving operators, making the profession 13 times

more dangerous than the average job.

- There are approximately 3,500 hot mix asphalt facilities in the United States and more than 7,000 paving contractors employing more than 300,000 workers.
- Most of the asphalt in the United States is used either for paving of roads or roofing operations. According to estimates by the CDC up to 50,000 roofers are exposed to asphalt fumes every year. Other use includes insulation, damp proofing, and waterproofing.