Meat Packers Stats and Facts

FACTS

American meat processing and packing employees suffer from broken fingers, amputation, severe burns, head trauma, repetitive stress injuries. Here are reasons why:

1. The speed of the work: Meat processors often operation on lines that are in continuous motion. This requires workers to move fast in order to keep up. When working at a high rate of speed, errors occur.
2. The tools used: Many meat-processing workers aren’t just moving fast; they’re moving fast with sharp tools like knives and saws. When an error is made the damages caused can be devastating.
3. Repetition: Working on a line requires these workers to perform the same movements over and over again with little to no breaks. This can cause repetitive stress injuries that can be long-lasting, such as carpal tunnel.
4. Lack of safety measures: Far too many employers fail to provide workers with appropriate training and safety equipment. This sets the stage for disastrous workplace accidents that can leave workers seriously injured.

STATS

- According to OSHA, food slicers and meat grinders sustained 4,000 serious cut injuries and amputations.
- The most commonly reported workplace hazards were knife (93.6%), bones (57.3%), and slippery floor (24.8%). The most common health problems were knife cuts (87.3%), cuts from bones (50.3%), and neck pain (36.9%).
- In 2017, 4,910 cases of injury and illness involving days away from work occurred in the animal slaughtering and processing industry. In most of these cases (69 %), the workers were men.

- In 4,910 of the cases, the worker missed 1 or more days away from work, 37 % of these cases involved overexertion and bodily reaction. Another 13,300 cases involved job transfer or worker restriction.
- In 2017, 54 % of the job transfer or restriction cases involved overexertion and bodily reaction. The rate of total recordable cases per 100 full-time workers was 5.4, higher than the rate for all private industry (3.0) and manufacturing (3.8).
- In 2020 5,260 injuries related to animal slaughtering resulted in workers spending days away from work.
- Approximately 44 % of the female injuries were overexertion injuries versus only 28 % of the male injuries. Fifty five percent of the injuries occurred to workers 20 to 34 years of age. The incidence of injuries by occupation was: meat cutter, 49 %t; butcher, 2 %; meat packer and wrapper, 4 %; material handler, 7 percent; and laborer, 9 %. 66 % of the injuries consisted of strains, sprains, lacerations, contusions, and abrasions. Approximately 22.5 % of the injuries involved the fingers, 15.5 % the back, 11.7 % the arms, and 8.6 % the hand.