



Household Maintenance

This publication outlines some trends and patterns extracted from the NCIS database where Household Maintenance was the activity at the time of the incident that lead to death. Basic demographic details and the types of external cause deaths associated with household maintenance activities are examined. It also highlights coronial recommendations made and provides links to sources of additional information.

Table 1: Activities at time of Incident for External Cause Deaths

What is Activity at Incident?

Activity at incident leading to death is recorded on the NCIS for both Natural and External Causes of Death. The capture of this information is important for injury prevention research.

Up to 3 levels of data can be recorded for Activity. The first two levels are selected from standardised classifications. The third level is a free text field that can be completed by coders to add further context to the activity being undertaken.

External Cause deaths account for 32% of closed cases on the NCIS

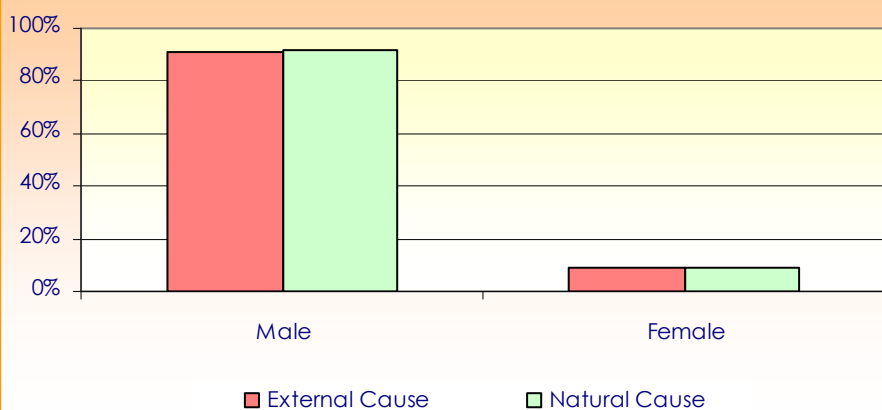
Table 1 shows the Top 20 Activities for External Cause deaths for closed cases. As highlighted, household maintenance is the 18th most common activity.

Activity Description – Level 2	Total
Self inflicted harm	9182
General travel	4851
Resting, Sleeping	1291
Being nursed or cared for in a formal health care setting	1142
Other specified personal activity	1100
Other Specified activity excluding travel	1052
Unlikely to be known	1015
Working, including travelling for work	645
Informal sports and active recreation	522
Unspecified leisure activity	393
Other specified leisure activity	288
Unspecified personal activity	279
Eating, Drinking	278
Leisure time activities with an entertainment element, such as going to the cinema, to a dance/party	235
Still Enquiring	116
Travelling to or from such work (commuting)	116
Washing oneself, such as showering, etc	110
Household maintenance	92
Organised sports and active recreation	84
Informally being nursed or cared for	60
Grand Total	22850

Source: External Cause deaths recorded on the NCIS from 1/7/2000 - 30/6/2005.
Extracted: June 2005



No of Deaths by Case Type and Gender

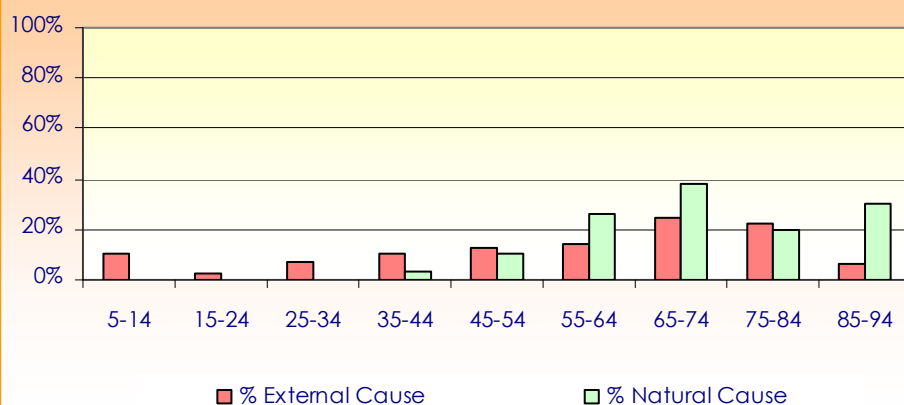


Other Studies:

A study of Victorian data undertaken in 1999 by Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC)* showed that 95% of Do-It-Yourself home maintenance injuries and deaths involved males with the majority between the ages of 60 – 69.

* Ashby, K., 1999, Injuries associated with Do-It-Yourself activities, *Hazard*, Edition 41, p 1-12.

No of Deaths by Case Type and Age Group

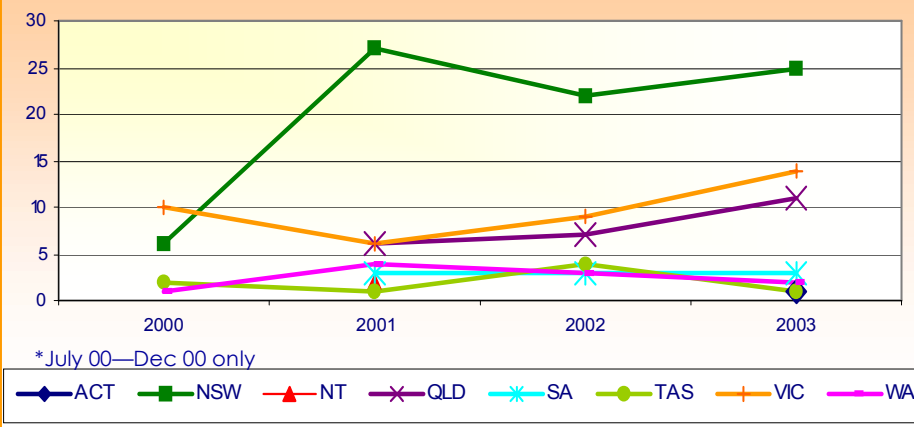


NCIS Data:

Data from the NCIS shows a similar pattern as out of the 206 deaths, 188 were males and just under half (47%) of External Cause deaths involved the 65 – 84 age range. 58% of Natural Cause deaths were also between the same age range.

In most states the number of deaths associated with household maintenance activities showed a slight increase over the period 2000 - 2003. As coding is not yet completed for 2004 and 2005 cases they are not shown on the chart. However, to date there are 31 household maintenance deaths coded on the NCIS for 2004 and 2 in 2005

No of Deaths by State and Year



The current NCIS case closure rates are shown below.

Case Year	Percentage Closed
2000	95%
2001	83%
2002	91%
2003	85%
2004	63%
2005	26%

All states except QLD have data available on the NCIS from available from 1/7/2000.
 QLD data available from 1/1/2001
 Data extracted June 2005.



Household Maintenance Deaths by Mechanism:

Primary Mechanism	Secondary Mechanism	Tertiary Mechanism	Total External Cause Deaths
Blunt force	Falling, stumbling, jumping		36
	Contact with blunt object	Contacting static object	17
		Motor Vehicle Accident, Contact with Moving object, Stuck by Moving Object	3
	Crushing	Pinching, crushing between	3
Blunt force Total			59
Heat, cold, electricity, radiation, and sound	Electricity, radiation	Electric current	12
	Heat, cold		5
Heat, cold, electricity, radiation, and sound Total			17
Threats to breathing	Drowning and immersion	Drowning/near-drowning following fall into water	6
	Other Threats to breathing including hanging, other specified or unspecified		3
Threats to breathing Total			9
Poisoning by or exposure to chemical substances Total			3
Piercing, penetrating force Total			3
Medical/Surgical Injury	Abnormal reaction of the patient caused by surgical operations and other surgical procedures, without mention of misadventure at the time of the procedure, nec		1
Grand Total			92

65% of external cause household maintenance deaths have the primary mechanism coded as Blunt Force. The two main categories of Blunt Force deaths are falls and contacting a static object. On further review of these deaths, it was found that 47 of the 59 cases were actually due to falls from or through a roof or fibreglass sheeting or falls involving a ladder (see below). This data only looks at the first level of mechanism coded. This accounts for some of the differences in coding between similar incidents, ie. Depending on the nature of the incident, the fall may be coded first in some cases or the contact with the blunt object may be coded first in others.

Type of Fall	Total
Falls From Roof	9
Falls Through Roof/Fibreglass	7
Falls Involving Ladders	24
Falls—Not further specified	5
Falls Involving Scaffolding	2
TOTAL	47

Therefore, falls accounted for 51% of the total External Cause deaths which is in keeping with the MUARC study that found that 40% of DIY deaths were due to falls from a roof or ladder.

The other significant types of deaths whilst undertaking household maintenance are due to 'Heat, cold, electricity, radiation and sound' and 'Threats to breathing' with 13% due to electrocution and 7% due to drowning.



Two cases out of the 92 external cause deaths have had Coronial recommendations made*.

NCIS Numbers: VIC.2003.370
VIC.2003.2153

The recommendations that were made make note of the fact that a high proportion of home maintenance deaths are in the 60 – 69 year old age group and that it is likely this age group may not have had much exposure to safety warnings in their working years.

The recommendations suggest that further research be undertaken to monitor the number of home maintenance deaths with a view to disseminate safety warnings and relevant information to a range of organisations, both commercial and government, if the research suggests there is still a high incidence of household maintenance deaths.

Note: This publication was not designed to monitor household maintenance as per the coronial recommendations but to highlight the types of information available from the NCIS and to create awareness of national trends.

* Based on where the 'Recommendation/Warning' field is recorded by coronial staff as 'Recommendations Made/warnings Made'.

Relevant Links



- **The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)**

<http://natindex.nohsc.gov.au/>

NOHSC have developed an Australian Occupational Health and Safety Index which provides links to practical guidance and safety alerts on Australian OHS websites.

Below are the titles of some publications that may be of relevance regarding home maintenance safety issues. *Note: These publications are mostly aimed at work related safety however some of the general principles may still apply to persons undertaking work at home.*

- 'Code of Practice for the prevention of falls in general construction'—Worksafe Victoria.
- 'Ladder Safety'—Workcover Tasmania

To find these documents, simply type the title or relevant subject matter into the Keyword search box on the <http://natindex.nohsc.gov.au/> website or Browse by subject area.

- **Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC)**

<http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/>

To view the 'Injuries associated with Do-It-Yourself activities' study mentioned in this bulletin, go to the <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/> website and follow the links to VISAR or HAZARD - (VISAR journal). Edition 41 contains the study on DIY activities.

- **National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU)**

<http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au>

The National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU) is the collaborating unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in the subject area of injury

Bulletin Feedback Form

We are interested in your thoughts on our first 'trend analysis' bulletin.

Are you interested in receiving future editions?

Yes No

We have listed below some possible areas of interest for the coming editions. Please indicate which areas you would be interested in reading about or indicate in the space provided below other areas you may be interested in:

- Intentional Self-Harm deaths
- House fires
- Analysis of Natural Cause deaths using ABS ICD-10 codes
- Sports related deaths
- Water craft or Air craft deaths
- Pedestrian Vs Motor Vehicle deaths
- Rural/Regional Deaths using ABS codes

Other:

Other Comments:

Please Return To:

National Coroners Information System (NCIS)
c/o Victorian Institute Forensic Medicine
57-83 Kavanagh Street, Southbank VIC 3006
Fax: 03 9682 7353

OR email comments to Rebecca Thornton, Coronial Liaison Officer, NCIS at the following address: rebeccat@vifm.org