BRITISH DRILLING ASSOCIATION

# ACCIDENTSTATISTICS2024

## INTRODUCTION

**The British Drilling Association (BDA) remains steadfastly committed to driving safety improvements across the drilling sector, recognising that sustained progress in occupational health and safety requires both rigorous data analysis and collaborative industry engagement. This annual accident statistics report serves as a critical tool for understanding safety performance trends, identifying emerging risks, and establishing evidence-based priorities for future intervention strategies.**

The value of comprehensive accident data collection extends far beyond regulatory compliance. Accurate, consistently reported safety statistics enable the drilling industry to benchmark performance against both historical trends and broader construction sector metrics, facilitating informed decision-making at both organisational and industry levels. When drilling contractors systematically record and report accident data, the collective intelligence generated allows for the identification of common hazard patterns, the evaluation of control measure effectiveness, and the development of targeted safety initiatives that address root causes rather than symptoms.

Through refined data collection processes, enhanced member collaboration, and improved analytical approaches, the BDA continues to transform raw incident data into actionable insights. This evidence-based methodology not only supports individual member organisations in improving their safety performance but also strengthens the industry's collective ability to anticipate and mitigate emerging risks. The drilling sector's unique operational environment, characterised by mobile drilling operations, variable site conditions, and complex ground engineering challenges - demands sector-specific safety intelligence that generic construction industry data cannot adequately provide. Furthermore, robust accident reporting creates a foundation for meaningful dialogue with regulatory bodies, insurance providers, and client organisations. When the drilling industry can demonstrate transparent, comprehensive safety data collection, it positions the sector as a responsible, forward-thinking partner in construction projects. This enhanced credibility supports improved contractual relationships, more favourable insurance arrangements, and greater influence in the development of industry-relevant safety regulations and standards.

The 2024 dataset represents not merely a compilation of incident statistics, but a strategic resource for driving continuous improvement across the drilling sector. By analysing trends in accident causation, severity, and frequency, the BDA and its members can make informed investments in training programmes, equipment upgrades, and procedural enhancements that deliver measurable safety outcomes. This report therefore serves multiple stakeholder groups: drilling contractors seeking to benchmark their performance, safety professionals developing intervention strategies, and industry leaders planning long-term safety investments.

## DATA SUBMISSION & PARTICIPATION

Member participation in accident data submissions decreased slightly from 75% in 2023 to 72% in 2024. Although this trend is not aligned with our objectives, it enables BDA to provide a robust and representative picture of industry safety performance. This level of engagement supports a clearer understanding of high-risk areas and helps guide future safety initiatives.

BRITISH DRILLING ASSOCIATION

## KEY METRICS FOR 2024

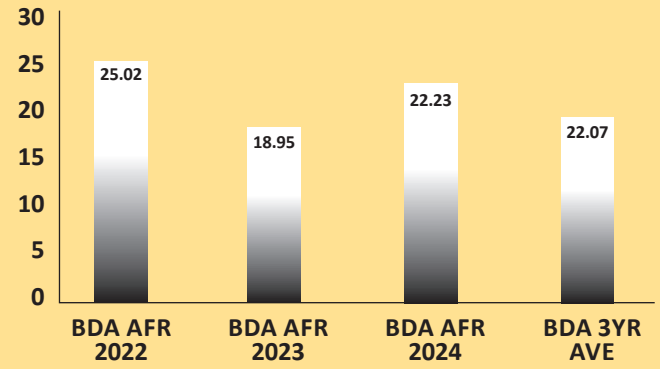
Accident statistics are meaningless without context or the ability to benchmark data. The BDA has chosen to use HSE Construction Industry data 2024[1] and use of LFS, average estimate over 2020/21-2023/24 where applicable. For reporting purposes the calculation of Accident Incident Rates (AIR) & Accident Frequency Rates (AFR) will be determined as follows:

***- Accident Incident Rate (AIR): (Number of RIDDOR-reportable incidents/Average workforce) x 100,000***

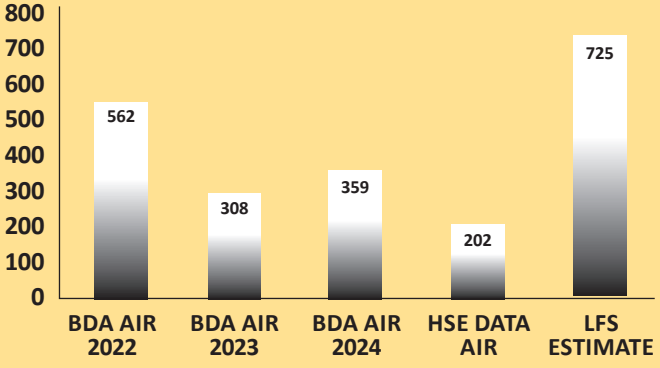
***- Accident Frequency Rate (AFR): (Number of recordable accidents/Total hours worked) x 1,000,000***

***Performance Data: AIR and AFR Statistics***

**BDA AFR** (PER 1 MILLION EXPOSURE HRS) **3YR AVE**




**BDA AIR** (RIDDOR) **3YR AVE V CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY STATS**

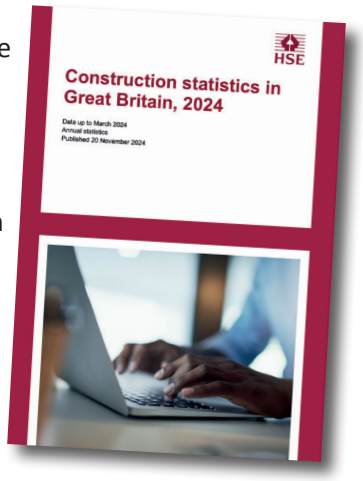



Both recorded AIR and AFR increased in 2024. The recorded AIR rose from 308 to 359, representing an overall increase of 16%. The industry AFR also increased by 17% to 22.23 in the same period. While these statistics show a negative trend in isolation, they may also be attributed to more transparent reporting from member organisations, particularly given consistent accident returns from BDA members in providing statistics. It should be noted that statistical comparisons with the wider construction industry should be approached with consideration and caution when used for interpretive purposes.

## PERFORMANCE DATA: **BDA & HSE CONSTRUCTION STATISTICS**

According to the latest data collected by the BDA, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of accidents reported over the past year. In 2024, there were 29 RIDDOR reportable accidents compared to 20 in 2023, representing a 45% increase. This negative trend could indicate that risk control methods are proving ineffective, or alternatively, that a more transparent reporting culture is developing.

Contact with machinery has emerged as a leading contributor to RIDDOR incidents, now overtaking lifting and handling as the primary cause of incapacitation, alongside slips, trips, and falls incidents. Our statistics show that of the 29 RIDDOR reportable accidents, 19 (66%) were attributed to over-7-day incidents, which aligns closely with the HSE reported figure of 62%. The latest figures for non-fatal injuries leading to over 7-day incapacitation from BDA & HSE data are displayed on the graphs on following page.




[1] Construction statistics in Great Britain, 2024

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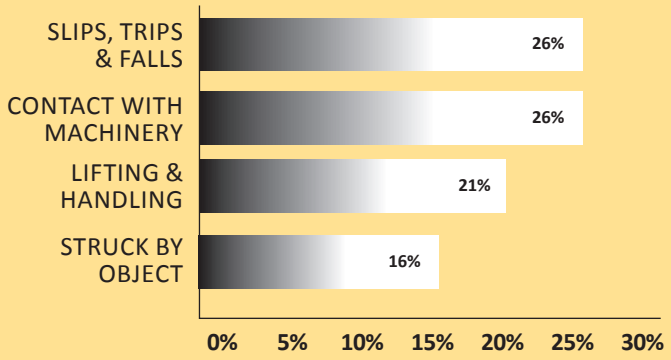
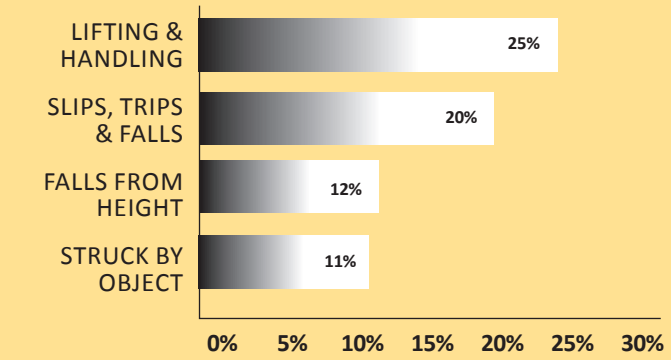
## PERCENTAGE NON-FATAL INJURIES RESULTING IN OVER 7-DAY INCAPACITATION FOR BDA 2024



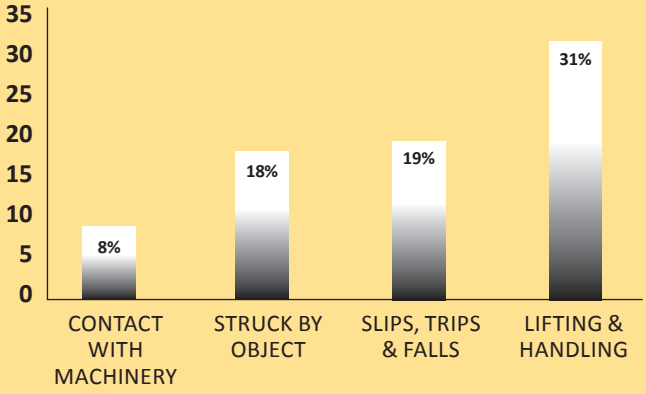

## PERCENTAGE NON-FATAL INJURIES RESULTING IN OVER 7-DAY INCAPACITATION FOR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY 2024




The BDA has worked closely with its members to provide a comprehensive audit programme covering all aspects of safety and best practices on drilling sites. The audit programme has undoubtedly played a significant role in ensuring industry standards are maintained.

Additionally, the programme has implemented stricter safety guidelines and regulations for members to follow. By enforcing these standards, the association ensures that drilling operations are carried out safely and responsibly, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries to workers.

## MOST COMMON INJURY TYPES - NON REPORTABLE BDA 2024




RIDDOR incidents within the industry can be attributed to lack of hazard awareness, inadequate site preparation, and operational pressures, however, without clear insight into accident causation, no definitive assumptions can be made regarding this trend. The increase may result from more transparent reporting rather than deteriorating safety standards. Non-reportable injuries fell from 255 to 216 over the past year, representing a 15% reduction overall.

This is a positive trend; however, it should be noted that the same accident types continue to occur. Manual handling injuries remain the biggest cause of accidents in the drilling industry, while slips, trips, and falls constitute another major contributor. These statistics should encourage targeted focus areas for the industry to reduce the continued trend of accident causation.

HSE reported 51 workplace fatalities in 2023/2024 for the construction industry. With 52% being a result of falls from height. HSE show 4,050 non-fatal RIDDORs recorded in the 2024 reporting period: 1,532 (38%) were specified injuries and 2,518 (62%) were injuries resulting in worker incapacitation for over seven days. Slips, trips and falls account for 24% of all RIDDORS with a reported 978 reports, closely followed by Falls from Height with 807 (20%) of all reportable incidents.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates that of 47,000 non-fatal injuries, 33% resulted in over-7-day absence from work, which is significantly higher than HSE data. The HSE notes that the LFS provides the best indication of workplace injury scale in the construction industry, and that non-fatal injuries are grossly under-reported, particularly among the self-employed.

BRITISH DRILLING ASSOCIATION

Analysing the collected data, the drilling industry performs well compared to LFS data; however, work remains to be done to reduce the AIR further when assessed against HSE AIR based on recorded incidents. For fair comparison, consideration must be given to the environment, conditions, and nature of work. When using direct comparisons, the types of injuries realised should be considered.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

While physical injuries decreased, the industry experienced a 196% increase in mental health-related cases and a substantial increase in lost time, with 2,985 declared days lost in 2024 - an increase of 477% compared to 2023.

HSE construction industry data shows the rate of self-reported workplace stress is 690 per 100,000 people. In comparison, the BDA reported 90 cases from a reported workforce of 5287, which results in a mental health incident rate of 1702 per 100,000 workers. This rise may reflect growing willingness to report psychological health issues, improved awareness among management, or genuine increases in mental health strain due to operational pressures. The BDA will continue to treat this area as critically important, working to normalise mental health support as a core component of site safety culture by encouraging proactive management of psychological risks and supporting collective approaches to mental health awareness and interventions.

## BDA AND AGS COLLABORATION

2024 marked the beginning of increased collaboration between the two main industry bodies: the BDA and AGS. It is important to distinguish the differences between BDA and AGS datasets when benchmarking safety outcomes. The AGS represents a broader cross-section of the geotechnical and geoenvironmental industry, including consultancies, laboratories, and design-focused organisations, many of which operate in lower-risk, office-based, or controlled environments.

In contrast, BDA membership consists predominantly of operational drilling contractors whose daily exposure includes mobile plant operations, variable site conditions and physical/manual labour.

*Consequently:*

- The AGS's overall AIR and AFR figures historically appear lower, but they represent lower inherent risk
- AGS trends in minor injuries and hazard observations suggest a more advanced reporting culture in some sectors, but the absence or reduced use of heavy plant makes direct comparisons difficult.

This divergence underlines the need for sector-specific benchmarks and tailored performance targets. The BDA's data should not be judged purely in comparison with office-dominant industries but rather considered within its own context of high-hazard, mobile-site activity.

## FORWARD STRATEGY: ADVANCING SAFETY IN DRILLING

While recent statistics demonstrate encouraging progress in accident reduction and greater engagement recognises that achieving long-term, sustainable improvements in health and safety requires a proactive and evolving strategy. Our forward-looking approach centres on strengthening industry-wide resilience, deepening our understanding of root causes, and addressing emerging risks—particularly those associated with mental health, automation, and workforce variation.

A core objective is to achieve full participation in data reporting across 100% of BDA membership. Accurate and transparent reporting is fundamental to identifying trends, benchmarking performance, and targeting interventions where most needed. The BDA will continue supporting members in building internal systems that make data collection easier, more reliable, and ultimately more useful for continuous improvement.

Alongside this, our Safety Sub-Committee will further refine its analytical methods to ensure comparisons with broader construction industry benchmarks remain both fair and relevant.

BRITISH DRILLING ASSOCIATION

Harnessing insights gained through our robust BDA Audit Programme represents another critical pillar of our strategy. Audit findings not only help individual organisations identify localised issues but, when reviewed collectively, reveal common patterns that can inform national guidance, training development, and operational best practice.

Moving forward, the BDA will enhance the integration of audit feedback into guidance materials and expand opportunities for peer-to-peer learning within the membership.

Recognising the significant rise in mental health-related absences within the drilling sector - alongside industry-wide emphasis on psychological safety - the BDA is committed to advancing its mental health strategy. This includes promoting practical tools for early identification and intervention, expanding awareness campaigns, and encouraging a culture where mental wellbeing is openly discussed and actively managed.

We will work with health professionals, industry bodies, and our members to ensure that mental health support becomes as routine and embedded as physical safety procedures.

Innovation remains a key enabler of improved safety outcomes, particularly where modern technology can reduce manual handling, eliminate exposure to high-risk tasks, or simplify compliance. The BDA will champion investment in safer drilling technologies, including wider adoption of remote handling equipment and automation tools. Moreover, we will collaborate with training providers to ensure that operatives are not only competent in drilling systems but also confident in using and maintaining them effectively and safely.

Finally, the BDA will continue fostering greater alignment with other industry bodies, such as the AGS and HSE, to ensure our strategy remains evidence-based and reflective of broader challenges and advances within the geotechnical and construction sectors. By aligning our safety initiatives with national frameworks and maintaining open dialogue across industries, we ensure that the drilling sector remains forward-thinking, compliant, and resilient.

## CONCLUSION

The BDA's safety strategy is built on a foundation of data, collaboration, innovation, and care. Our mission is to support every member in achieving not only compliance but true excellence in health and safety, creating safer working environments across every drilling operation in the UK.

*To continue improving, the BDA will prioritise:*

**- Achieving 100% member reporting engagement**

**- Increased mental health intervention programmes**

**- Wider adoption of hazard-reducing technologies**

**- Continued review of safety guidance and safety communications**

**- Data integration from audit and safety visits**

**- Advocacy for realistic, risk-based comparisons in industry benchmarking**

The 2024 data reflects significant progress in improving safety outcomes within the drilling sector. Through increased transparency, strengthened reporting mechanisms, modernisation of equipment, and emphasis on training and wellbeing, the BDA and its members are collectively fostering a safer and more resilient industry.

We encourage all members to remain audit-ready, uphold best practices, and continue their contribution to an industry-wide safety-first culture.

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Chair, BDA Safety Sub-Committee