

Here's to a Happy and Safe Festive Season

As we move into the festive season, Stephen Watkins, Director of Corporate Services at the Injuries Board, provides an overview of the services the Board provides and emphasises safety this December. The Injuries Board is the state body that handles personal injury claims.



The last few weeks have seen weather warnings, wind, rain, and cold, so it's easily known winter is here. December marks the beginning of winter and the start of the festive period. According to Injuries Board statistics, it's also the time of year when we are likely to see spikes in accidents resulting in personal injury claims as traffic increases, many businesses experience their busiest time of the year, and people are out in shops, restaurants and public places.

The Injuries Board is the independent State body that makes awards for compensation arising from motor, public and employer liability claims. Last year motor liability awards accounted for 75% of total awards (€198m awarded to 9,328 claimants); public liability awards accounted for 17% of awards (€53m awarded to 2,151 claimants); and employer liability awards accounted for 8% of awards (€30m awarded to 941 claimants.)

Retail Ireland has predicted that retail sales for December 2015 will reach over €4 bn. It's important that retail and leisure outlets, offices, factories and other workplaces don't allow safety to be compromised during this busy period. Now is the time to refocus on the importance of health and safety in the workplace.

Slips, trips and falls accounted for the largest majority of employer liability awards last year (29%), followed by injuries sustained by being struck by an object (13%) and unsafe systems of work (13%). The numbers driving for work are also high at this time of year, and we urge everybody to heed the advice of the Health & Safety Authority who have in-depth safety guidelines available whatever industry you work in.

All road users should heed the advice of the Gardai and the Road Safety Authority, and avoid taking risks that every year lead to the festive season becoming a time of tragedy for some. Motorists should pay particular attention to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, who are less visible in the dark evenings.

In the main however, Christmas is a time when people have the chance to get out and about and soak up the festive atmosphere. Theatres, shops, bars and restaurants will be packed in the coming weeks, so take care when out and about. Injuries Board data has shown these public places feature regularly in our public liability claims, but the data also shows that most of these injuries are minor and with greater awareness, we can work to reduce them.

Accident victims who intend making a personal injury claim must do so through the Injuries Board, unless the case is settled directly with the other party involved. Claimants can choose to deal directly with the Board or make their claim through a solicitor/intermediary. Intending claimants are advised to carry out some basic research if choosing a solicitor/ intermediary, or call us directly in the first instance, to avoid committing to a service and cost they might not need.

The Injuries Board can be contacted by telephoning our Lo-Call helpline 1890 829 121 between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, by logging on to www.injuriesboard.ie or by writing to us at InjuriesBoard.ie, P.O. Box 8, Clonakilty, Co Cork. You can also download the Injuries Board smartphone app or follow us on Twitter @injuriesboard

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