

As construction in the Triangle continues to boom, several concerning trends related to workplace fatalities and injuries have emerged. First, construction remains the most dangerous industry in our state. The North Carolina Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division (NCOSH) reports that, of the 40 workplace fatalities in North Carolina last year, 17 of them were in the construction industry. According to a recent report by the Triangle Business Journal, nearly \$25 billion was spent on new constructions projects in 2017. While investment in new projects has grown at a rapid pace, workplace inspections have decreased to nearly *half* of what they were just seven years ago. Unsurprisingly, less workplace inspections has resulted in fewer identified serious safety violations. Those violations, when identified early, can prevent injuries, or even save lives.

The Triangle Business Journal article also addressed some of the issues surrounding collection of workplace data, including that many injuries may go unreported for fear of retaliation or other consequences. According to the article, "This effect is often compounded among undocumented workers," who "often believe they will have to pay for medical expenses themselves and don't understand that workers' compensation insurance could cover them." According to attorney Steven Corriveau, the second point is correct, and very important: "our workers' compensation laws do not discriminate based on whether the injured worker is a citizen, permanent resident, or undocumented. In fact, the Act's definition of 'employee' includes 'aliens...whether lawfully or unlawfully employed.'"