



**Accidents:** In South Africa, industrial accidents in general do not present a major cost to management. Unskilled workers are easily and cheaply replaced, especially considering the high unemployment rate. Injured or "unproductive" workers can be endorsed out of the cities back to the "homelands" with little chance of obtaining substantial, or any compensation (see legislation). In 1976, 340 000 accidents occurred in work places in South Africa and 100 000 hands, 50 000 feet and 40 000 eyes were estimated to be seriously injured.

## Legislation

Out of 8 million workers in South Africa, 71,9% are not covered by legislation relating to occupational disease.

The twin aspects of statutory regulation, namely, prevention and compensation, have been dominated for too long by the Factories, Building Works and Machinery Act 41 of 1944 and the Workmen's Compensation Act 30 of 1941.

**Substances causing ill-health:** Many substances are known to be hazardous to health, e.g. lead. A recent survey showed that 13 of 18 lead-using firms failed to meet industrial health standards, accepted overseas in one or more major respects. More than 40 000 workers who mine, produce or handle asbestos run the risk of serious or even fatal illnesses.

## Farmworkers

"Farmworkers — the largest, lowest-paid group of workers in South Africa — also have less protection than any others against occupational diseases and accidents". In some areas of the Western Cape, wheat farmers were paying about R12 a week, while in the Free State, workers received half of this wage.

Major hazards to which farmworkers are exposed are:

1. diseases caught from animals (zoonoses).
2. poisonous pesticides.
3. accidents with farm machinery.
4. maltreatment by farmers.

## Occupational Diseases caused by Gases and Chemicals:

A few examples:

**Ammonia:** wide range of industries where exposure may take place. Total of 6 794 factories employing 589 672 workers.

**Ozone:** long exposures to high ozone concentrates can cause oedema, haemorrhage and chronic bronchitis. 3 793 factories exist employing 175 605 workers.

**Vinyl Chloride:** tests have revealed cancer of liver, kidneys, lungs, brain. Potentially exposed population in 451 plastic factories is 23 767 workers.