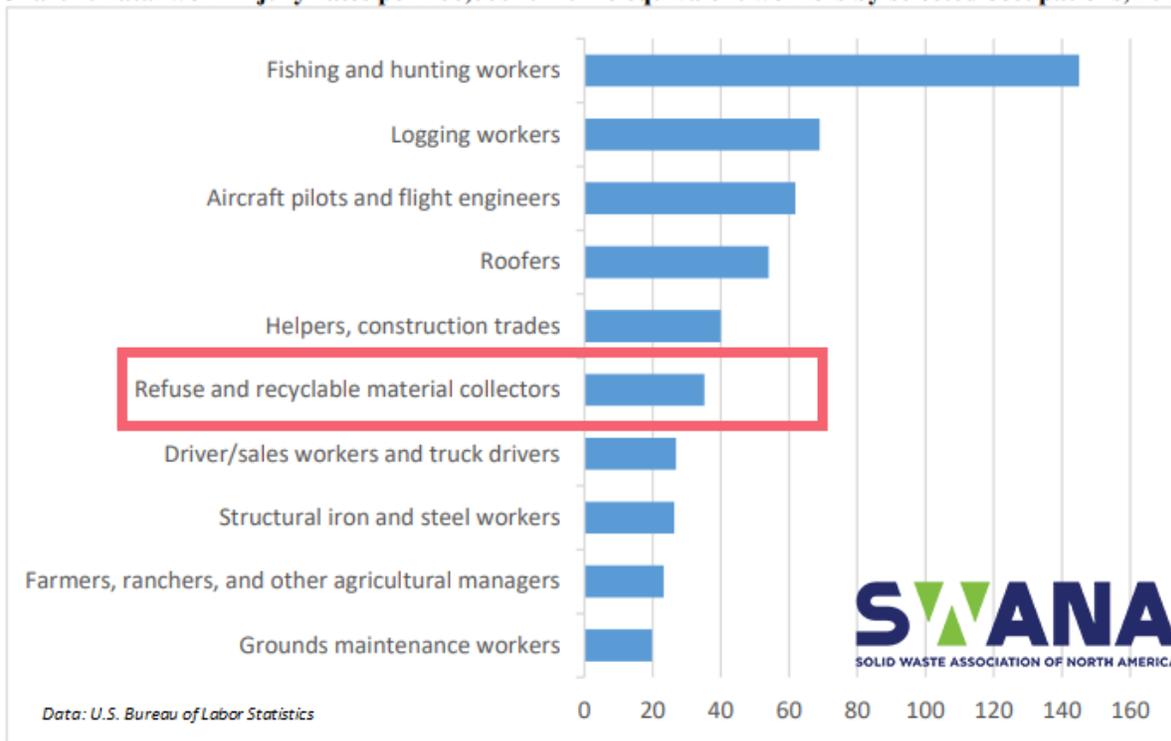


## BLS Reports Solid Waste and Recycling Collectors Have Sixth Highest Fatality Rate

*SWANA pushes to keep reducing incidents through continued safety focus, training, and resources*

**Silver Spring, MD** – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [released the 2019 National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries](#) showing that refuse and recyclable materials collectors had the 6<sup>th</sup> deadliest occupation in the United States. This is a slight improvement from being 5<sup>th</sup> on the list, where it has been for the past several years. The workplace fatality rate for this group declined from 44.3 in 2018 to 35.2. This is still above the 2017 and 2016 rates which were 35.0 and 34.1, respectively.

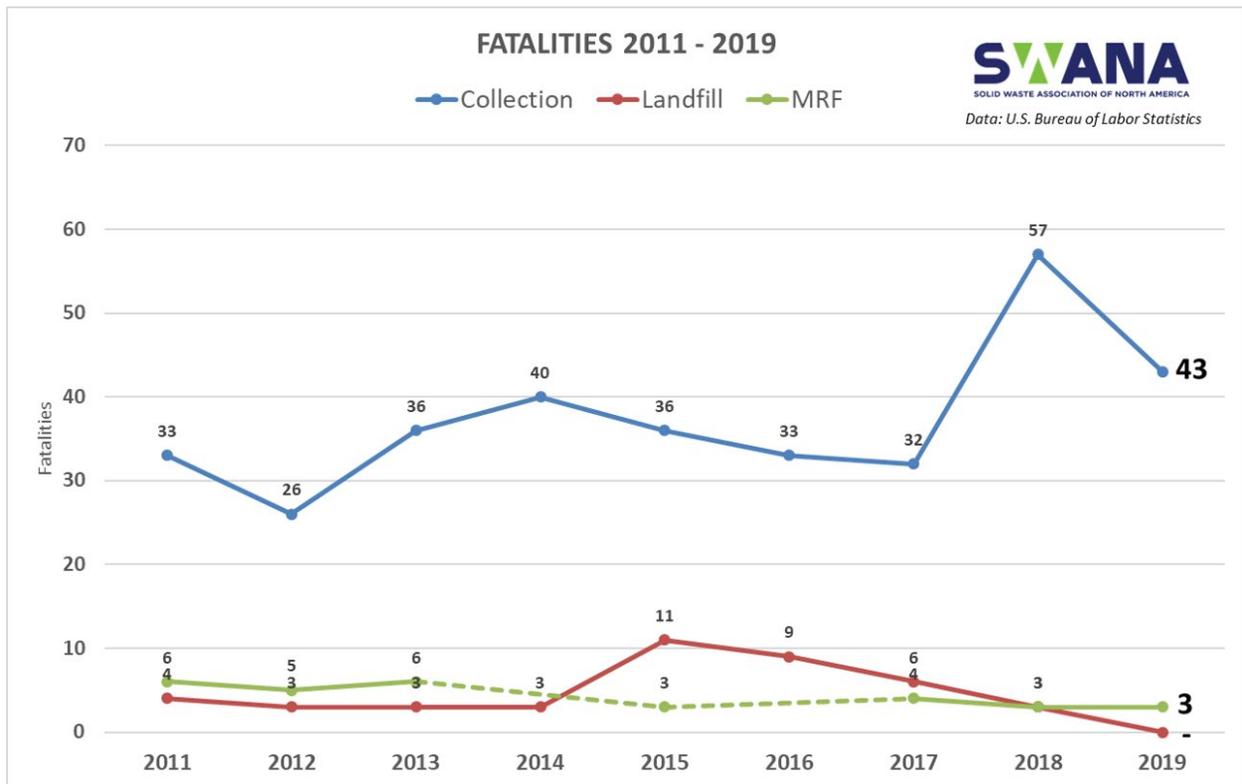
**Chart 4. Fatal work injury rates per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers by selected occupations, 2019**



Solid waste collection (NAICS 562111) saw a reduction in fatalities in 2019, with 43 worker deaths. This is down from 57 in 2018 but remains well above the average rate of 36.6 over the previous 8 years.

Fatalities at material recovery facilities (NAICS 562920) remained unchanged from the previous year with 3. The data profile for solid waste landfills (NAICS 562212) does not show any fatalities listed for 2019. SWANA’s 2019 fatality report recorded 11 fatalities occurring at landfills, including several incidents involving landfill workers and contract employees. SWANA intends to reach out to BLS for additional clarification concerning its 2019 landfill employee category.

“Although the reduction in worker fatalities last year compared to 2018 is welcome, the frequency of these fatal incidents is still above historical averages, and remains too high,” stated David Biderman, SWANA’s Executive Director and CEO. “We expect to report a further decline for the current year when SWANA releases its annual industry safety report for 2020 in connection with our February 2021 Safety Summit. SWANA will continue providing useful safety resources and information to the public and private sector waste industry, in both the United States and Canada, in our effort to reduce fatalities, accidents, collisions, and claims involving our employees, trucks, heavy equipment and facilities. Nothing we do is more important.” Biderman added.



“Waste Connections first operating value is safety,” said Shawn Mandel, Vice President of Safety & Risk at Waste Connections. “The safety of our team members and the

communities we are privileged to serve is of paramount importance. Our partnership with public and private sector industry professionals and associations like SWANA, are instrumental to help improve the waste industry safety performance and reduce the loss of lives. We sincerely thank SWANA and their member organizations for the support and leadership to drive the safety message throughout our industry.”

In November, BLS released [2019 employer-reported injury and illness data](#) showing an increase in the injury and illness rate for landfill workers. Employees doing collection and at MRFs saw decreases in their incident rates last year.

The results of the 2019 worker fatality census and injury and illness data will be addressed at the virtual [SWANA Safety Summit](#) on February 25, 2021. SWANA’s 2020 fatality report will also be released as part of the Summit, followed by deep dives by industry safety experts into what this data means for collection and post-collection safety. Industry leaders will also gather to discuss their response to the pandemic along with lessons learned to prepare for future challenges. The SWANA Safety Summit will be an excellent opportunity to understand exactly where the industry stands and how we can do better.

To learn more about SWANA and SWANA’s initiatives, visit <https://swana.org/initiatives/safety>.

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## **ABOUT SWANA:**

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) is an organization of more than 10,000 public and private sector professionals committed to advancing from solid waste management to resource management through their shared emphasis on education, advocacy and research. For close to 60 years, SWANA has been the leading association in the solid waste management field. SWANA serves industry professionals through technical conferences, certifications, publications and a large offering of technical training courses.