

Accident Matters

Quarterly report based on Accident E-log
entries from Apr, 26 to June, 26

With a special focus on Gujarat's Chemical Industry





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Accident data was collected and acted upon by the various executives at Worker Facilitation Centres (WFCs) of Aajeevika Bureau and WFF, and community resource people.

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Work Fair and Free is driven by a commitment to advance worker-centric action and knowledge, so that informal labour migration can become more secure and dignified. Incubated by Aajeevika Bureau, a pioneering migrant workers' support organization in the country, WFF was established in 2022 with the mandate of strengthening the ecosystem around labour migration by building practice, generating new knowledge and influencing public policy.

What is Accident E-log?

As per data collected by DGOSH (Directorate General Occupational Safety and Health), Indian factories recorded 1090 deaths and 2949 injuries in the year of 2023. This means on average, 3 factory workers died, and 9 got injured daily. However, these official figures cover only 2% of manufacturing establishments that are registered under the Factories Act, systematically excluding the vast informal sector, employing more than 90% of the Indian workforce.

Accident E-log intends to fill this data gap. An initiative by Work Fair and Free (WFF) and Aajeevika Bureau (AB), it is a crowd-sourced data platform that is designed to capture information on accidents and injuries in Indian workplaces. Its objectives are two-fold. Firstly, to identify workplace hazards across sectors to drive shop-floor solutions and make employers accountable for safer working environments. Secondly, to provide real-time assistance, including legal aid and emergency medical response to those in need.

E-log achieves this through a distributed network of Worker Facilitation Centres (WFCs) and community resource people, who do the work of identifying, documenting, and responding to accident cases. The vision of E-log is to be a democratically accessible tool that can be scaled up nationwide through a decentralized network of NGOs, lawyers, labour unions, community volunteers and other civil-society organizations.

E-log has been operational since the past 3 years and has recorded more than 2200 accidents from work destinations across 19 states and union territories. 90% of the accidents are from the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, where AB and WFF's field centres are located.

This report presents a snapshot of workplace accidents recorded **in the quarter of April, 26 to June, 26**, along with a brief analysis of the risks in Gujarat's chemical industry and what drives them.

A note on data: The figures below are based on publicly reported E-log entries and media reports, majorly from the regions of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, where Aajeevika Bureau and WFF's Worker Resource Centers operate. It does not represent the scale of accidents across India, which could be much higher.

Statistical Highlights

In the last 1 quarter (April 1st to June 30th, 2026), E-log has recorded -

131 accidents* **260 injuries** **18 deaths**

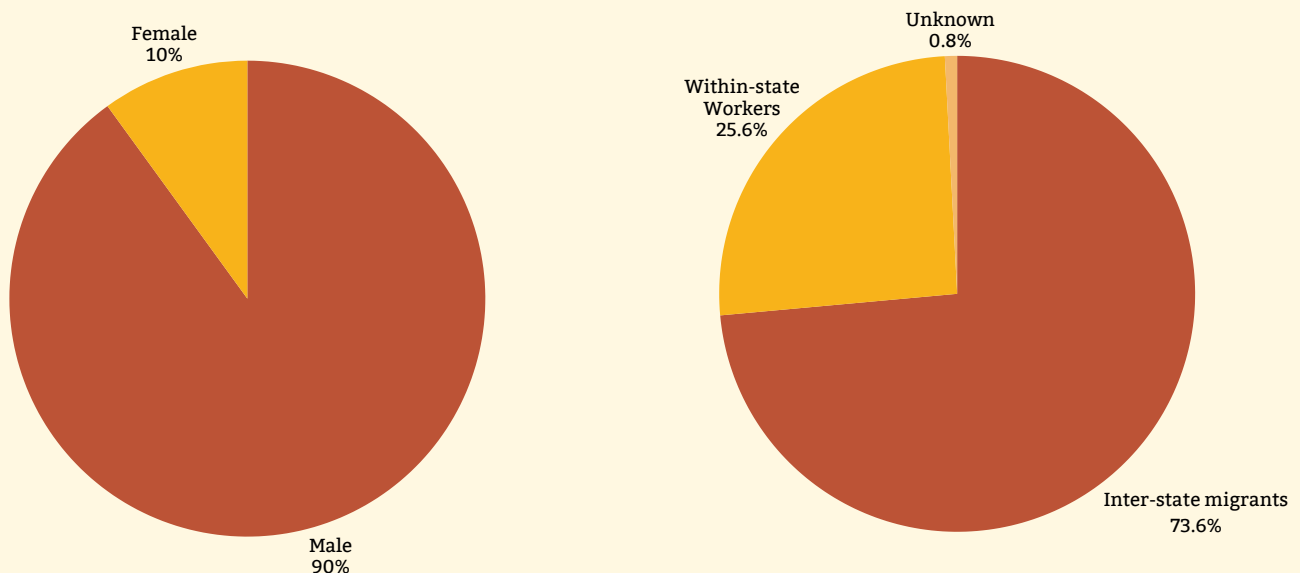
*Out of 131 cases, 10 cases involved multiple workers.

Top 3 industries with highest accidents:
Automobiles, Construction, Chemicals

2 major accidents with multiple fatalities were recorded,

- In June 2026, an **Ammonial gas leak incident** at a Seafood Processing plant in Periyapalam, Tamil Nadu affected 74 workers, leading to 5 deaths and dozens hospitalized. The workers, mostly migrants, also complained of breathlessness, eye irritation and severe respiratory distress.
- In April, 2026, a **boiler exploded** in Vedanta's Sakai Power Plant in Chhattisgarh, injuring about 40 workers and leaving 10 workers dead.

Demographic composition of Cases



Workers reporting injuries were predominantly male, with two-thirds being inter-state migrants primarily from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.

Geography & Industry



Out of all cases, 117 were reported only from Gujarat (47) and Maharashtra (70).

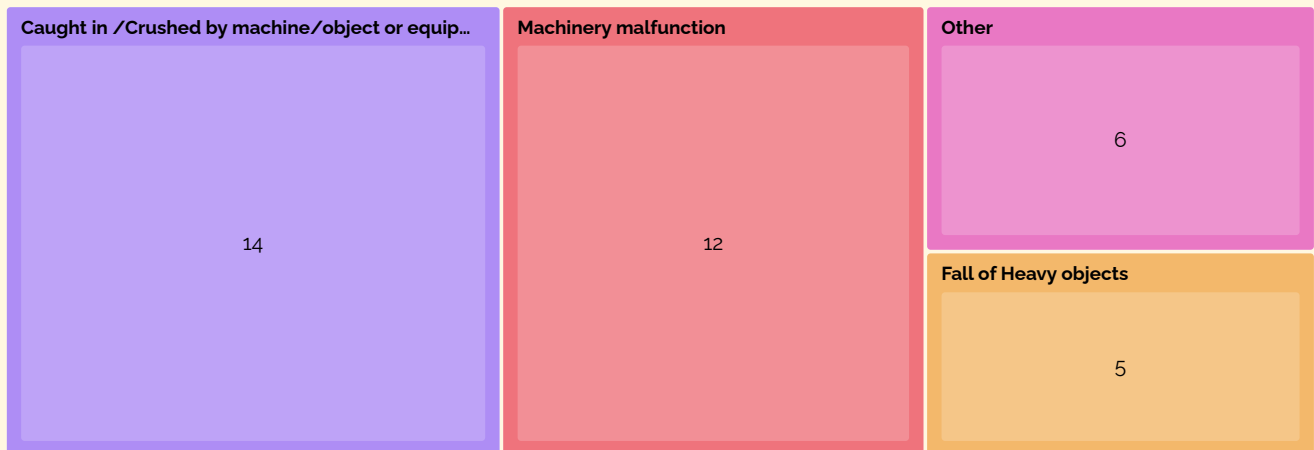
In Gujarat majority of the cases were from the construction industry in Ahmedabad, and the chemicals industry in Bharuch. About 50% of cases in Maharashtra came from the automobile Industry in Pune district, followed by construction and chemicals factories in Thane district.

Rest of the accidents were reported from Chhatisgarh (1), Tamil Nadu (1), Rajasthan (7), Uttar Pradesh (2), Madhya Pradesh (3), including cases from the metal manufacturing, stone-cutting, agriculture, waste work.

Causes of accidents and Injuries

Accident causes depend heavily on the nature of work in each industry. In the last quarter, 89 accidents have been reported from the automobile, construction, and the chemical industry. More than 127 workers sustained injuries, and upwards of 15 workers died.

Automobile Industry



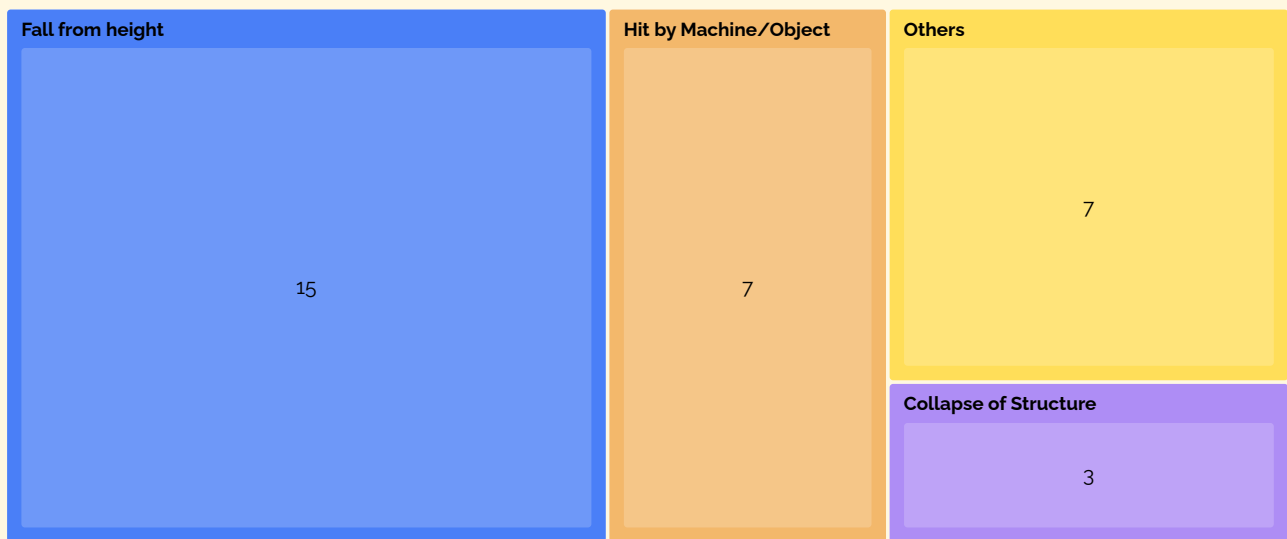
In the automobile industry, crush injuries were most common, often caused by malfunctioning machinery, defunct sensors, or a lack of adequate training of workers. In the past quarter, the majority of accidents in the automobile industry resulted in permanent disability, and 9 workers suffered from cuts and skin tears.

Chemical Industry



In the chemical industry, exposure to hazardous chemicals carries the risk of burns. Boiler explosions and resulting fires are frequently reported in chemical factories, which can often be fatal. Lack of provision or usage of PPE kits aggravates the risk. From April to June, E-log recorded 20 accidents in chemical factories. 15 workers sustained chemical burns, while others encountered skin infections or suffered from fire burns. In 3 cases, workers died due to chemical exposure or were caught in fire.

Construction Industry



In the construction sector, workers are often required to work at a height without safety belts or safety net, increasing the risk of fall injuries. Lack of safety helmets and other PPE protection also risks them being hit by heavy objects. Building structures collapsing is one of the deadliest hazards in the industry. In the last quarter, 32 accidents in the construction sector led to around 12 deaths, 9 cases of cuts and skin tears, while many workers had their bones broken or fractured.

Migrant workers are heavily concentrated in “hazardous 3D jobs” (dirty, dangerous, and degrading), in which they face a disproportionate level of risk. Well over **53% of workers injured in these three sectors were migrants**. This risk is compounded by a severe lack of institutional support and denial of justice, as only 12% of workers confirmed that compensation had been received. For others, the compensation was either in-process or denied.

Overall, the data uncovers a systemic crisis of worker safety and precariousness of work across industries. In the following section we **delve deeper into Gujarat’s chemical industry** to examine how broader industrial landscape, its history and practices, power asymmetries and the identity of workers shape the overall safety infrastructure.

Gujarat's Chemical Industry: Background and History

Gujarat, also known as 'India's Petro Capital', is the leading producer of chemicals in India, accounting for 62% of its petrochemical production, 53% of its chemical production, and 45% of its pharmaceutical production. Around 53% of India's chemical production units are located in Gujarat, concentrated around the industrial areas of Vapi, Ankleshwar, Panoli, Jhagadia, Dahej, Hazira, and Vadodara, together forming its 'golden corridor'.

The Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC), established in 1962, played a crucial role in changing the industrial landscape of Gujarat and turning it into a chemical production hub. In 1968, the Vapi Industrial Estate was set up, followed by the Ankleshwar Industrial Estate in the 1970s. Together, these estates today host more than 4,200 manufacturing units, the majority producing chemicals, and the bulk of them being small and medium enterprises.

Industries were attracted to the estates by the promises of subsidized loans, access to adequate water, electricity and road infrastructure, cheap land, and tax holidays. According to reports, the land for some of these estates was procured by the GIDC at a paltry rate of Rs. 4/sq.mtr. Moreover, these estates were set up along the NH8 corridor and in proximity to the Western Railway line, connecting them to the prosperous markets of Mumbai in the south and Delhi, Haryana, and Punjab in the north. Its proximity to Surat, an emerging textile manufacturing hub, provided a ready market for dyes and pigments.

Safety Concerns

But this explosion of growth is not without costs. Alongside reports of Gujarat's manufacturing success, are also lesser-known reports of massive fires, explosions, and deaths of the very workers that power these units. According to the latest stats on accidents published by the Labour Bureau in 2022, Gujarat reported the highest number of workplace accidents among all states. And nationally, the chemical industry was the single most hazardous industry, recording 324 accidents in a year. In a single quarter (April 1st to June 30th), 3 major incidents have been reported from the chemical factories of Gujarat.

Accidents in Chemical Industries of Gujarat (Apr-June quarter) reported in media

26th April: explosion caused a fire in a chemical factory in Jhagadia GIDC Industrial area, which injured at least 15 workers (Indian Express)

15 workers injured in blast at chemical company in Gujarat's Bharuch; 4 critical

While the cause of the blast at the company in Jhagadia is yet to be ascertained, eyewitnesses said billowing smoke was visible from at least 4 km away.

5th June: A tank blasted in a chemical factory in Ahmedabad leading to a massive fire, injuring 3 workers and killing one (Times of India)

1 dead, 3 injured in blast at chemical factory in Ahmedabad

TOI City Desk / TIMESOFINDIA.COM / Updated:
Jun 05, 2026, 17:30 IST

Preferred on 

 Comments

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28th June: Major fire broke out at a chemical factory in Vatva, Ahmedabad (Bhaskar English).

Massive fire at Vatva chemical factory: Highly flammable materials intensify blaze at the unit; firefighters deploy 22 engines to gain control

Ahmedabad 2 months ago



These accidents should not be understood as one-off occurrences, but rather as symptoms of a structural malaise, constituted by perverse incentive structures, backsliding of regulation, widening power differences, among others. The next section outlines these structural factors that work towards sustaining and often, worsening risks in Gujarat's Chemical Industry.

What is driving workplace risk in Gujarat's Chemical Industry?

Consecutive shifts, no rest

Chemical factories in these industrial clusters run a 24/7 schedule, divided across 12-hour shifts. If that's not long enough, the workers are sometimes asked to work consecutive overtime shifts. Handling chemicals is a delicate task requiring focus and concentration. For instance, mixing chemicals in the wrong proportions can lead to unwarranted reactions and result in explosions. In the absence of any rest, the workers are often exhausted and lack focus, making them more prone to such mistakes.

Few officers, fewer inspections

Back in 2011, Hirway & Shah had highlighted the issue of severe capacity shortage in Gujarat's DISH (Director of Industrial Safety and Occupational Health). They found that against the requirement of 232 labour officers as per ILO-norms, the number of sanctioned posts were only 154, out of which 46 were lying vacant for more than a year. In some districts such as Valsad, where chemical factories were concentrated, no full-time labour officers were appointed. They had concluded that the Labour Department was not capable of even handling complaints, let alone actively enforce labour laws.

The contemporary situation is no different. According to DGOSH's records, in 2019 only 57% of sanctioned posts for factory inspectors were filled. Gujarat also had the lowest rates of factory inspections, with only 26 to 30% of registered factories inspected.

Informalization of the workforce

In the industrial clusters of Vapi and Ankleshwar, the majority of the workforce is constituted by migrant workers from Bihar and UP. While factories in Ankleshwar are largely formal, the majority of the workers in these formal establishments, are hired under informal arrangements through third-party intermediaries. This allows the firms to evade accountability, as the responsibility for injuries and compensation also gets transferred to these intermediaries. Furthermore, a significant share of workers are not provided with ESIC benefits, leaving them at the mercy of their contractors for any medical emergencies. The absence of any institutional mechanisms for collective bargaining, further limits the agency of migrant workers to demand safety measures.

Culture of non-accountability

Over the years, a paradoxical culture of responsibility without authority has been internalized by all in the chemical industry. Employers and contractors have repeatedly refused to take accountability for workplace accidents, and have pushed a narrative of self-responsibility onto workers, without according them any decision-making power on target-setting, machine maintenance, and safety infrastructure. Paralelly, the labour unions which worked towards holding employers accountable, have also weakened considerably. In such a situation, the worker left to his/her own, comes to believe that all accidents are due to mistakes by the self.

Absence of data

OSH statistics, released by the Labour Bureau (LB) suffers from major deficiencies in coverage, representativeness, and consistency. LB aggregates data collected through the state labour departments, who in turn source data from factories themselves. In the past years, multiple states, including Gujarat have defaulted on sharing accident data. Moreover, there is a massive issue of underreporting of accidents, as highlighted by OSH experts. Finally, the most critical issue is of coverage, since accident data is collected from a handful of registered enterprises, excluding the vast majority of establishments which are informal.

Lack of training and PPE

Another major driver of accidents is lack of knowledge regarding safe work procedures and PPE kits. Even in formal industries, safety training is limited to 15-min PPE demonstrations and the workers are left to learn the work processes on the job. Freshers without any experience in chemical work, are sometimes given hazardous work which is often a recipe for accidents. In many factories, protective gear is not provided or workers are not trained on why and how to use them.

Weakening of Labour Laws

A recent ordinance amending the Factories Act in Gujarat, has increased operational flexibility for employers but at the cost of worker's rest-time. The ordinance increased the permissible number of daily working hours from 10 hours to 12 hours, with no changes in rest time. This effectively legitimized an already existing norm of 12 hours, further encouraging longer hours and higher work pressure on workers.

Furthermore, the new OSH Code redefines the role of the inspector as an 'inspector-cum-facilitator' who shall assist employers in complying with labour laws. While this approach seeks to encourage voluntary compliance, it assumes away the role of strong monitoring and enforcement mechanisms in ensuring accountability.

The way forward

Hiring more inspectors

The first step towards a more effective inspection regime is to fulfill the existing vacancies for the post of factory inspectors, and ensure that it creates permanent positions.

Broadening data-collection

As mentioned earlier, official estimates of workplace accidents are severely underestimated due to its limited focus on formal workplaces. Broadening the ambit of data collection through alternative methods like crowdsourcing, can expand visibility of accidents, and help inform policies for informal establishments.

Pro-active inspections

Inspections by DISH should move onto a culture of pro-active inspections, with a set cadence that ensures regular inspections across industrial clusters. Furthermore, stricter inspection on PPE provision, working hours and illegal overtime shifts, is required.

Reconsidering policy approach

The recently implemented Labour codes dilute the role of a factory inspector by replacing surprise factory inspections with randomized web-based inspections. This effectively reduces the potential for proactive oversight of industrial safety, furthering the precarity of Indian workplaces.

Therefore, there is a need to reconsider the role of inspectors and critically examine provisions increasing the permissible cap on overtime work to ensure adequate rest for workers.

Action over mediation

Penalties on companies that falter on safety measures, form a stronger deterrent than mediation exercises. The labour department should use it's authority of imposing penalties, especially on repeat offenders.

Stronger oversight over contractors

Majority of the workers in chemical industry of Gujarat, are hired through contractors, who are less likely to adequately train workers. It is in the interest of employing firms to conduct regular oversight upon the training and skill-levels of these contractual workers, to ensure a safe working space.

Strengthen Safety Audits and Compliance

Safety audits conducted by third-party agencies or government bodies such as the National Safety Council are crucial for assessing safety infrastructure and preventing accidents. These audits should be conducted pro-actively and extended to small units and contractual workers, who are often overlooked in such evaluations.

Conclusion

Despite decades of economic reform, a vast majority of India's workplaces remain informal. Erstwhile formal jobs in the organized sector are also increasingly being contractualized. Technological priorities are more focused on labour substitution than creating safer workplaces. In such a context, where workforce responsibilities are increasingly being outsourced to third-party contractors and collective power of worker unions are fast weakening, government regulations need to play an important role to ensure workplace safety. Instead, Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) in informal worksites continues to remain a statistical blindspot, with a complete absence of regulatory oversight.

Accident E-log is an attempt at highlighting this gap, by documenting accidents and injuries as they happen at both, informal and formal worksites. This report presents a snapshot of the nature of these accidents, its implications on a worker's life, and the state of remedial action.

This report foregrounds the story of Gujarat's chemical industry which has seen a dramatic rise in its production capacity, and share in exports. While discussing its economic success, the report also highlights the human costs of this growth which are borne by its workers through their lives and limbs. It shows that this chemical boom has not translated into safer workplaces for labourers, who continue to work in hazardous environment and regularly face workplace accidents, most of which go unreported.

These accidents are shaped by a combination of poor working conditions, increasing informalization, gaps in data, lack of training and a culture of non-accountability. These vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by weakening labour protections and inadequate regulatory capacity.

This report calls upon all stakeholders involved - employers, regulatory bodies, contractors and workers, to take cognizance of these safety concerns, and act upon it by taking responsibility, enforcing regulation, and instituting a culture of accountability through safety audits and inspections.

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