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Division of Public Health, Injury Control Program Focuses on Aviation Injuries

With the cooperation and assistance of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Section of Epidemiology has developed a surveillance system in Alaska for aviation-related injuries and for incidents in which an aircraft receives substantial damage. The system uses preliminary information collected by NTSB air safety investigators during crash investigations. Because events can be reclassified as investigations proceed, final data may be slightly different than presented. However, our surveillance system will provide timely information about aviation in Alaska.

During 1988-1990, 1,184 people were involved in 551 aviation incidents that were investigated by the NTSB, including 67 fatal crashes that resulted in 118 fatalities. Review of death certificates from 1980-1989 identified 598 people who died in aircraft crashes or aviation activities, including 24 Alaskans who died while flying outside of Alaska.

As is well known, the number of crashes and fatalities in Alaska rises every summer when the amount of flying increases dramatically. Still to come are our most dangerous months, August and September, when hunting season, decreasing daylight, and adverse weather conditions place heavy demands on persons and machines.

During the past three years, most crashes have occurred during "landing" and "takeoff," but fatal crashes most often have been associated with "cruise" and "maneuvering." Most incidents have occurred near Anchorage (101 crashes) and Fairbanks (29 crashes).

We have analyzed crash data for the first six months of 1991. So far, there have not been more crashes and fatalities than expected. Although there were 21 crashes in June, only one involved an air taxi operator.

Working together, Alaska's aviation community will continue to improve aviation safety. Public health professionals can contribute to this effort by improving surveillance and applying epidemiologic principles to aviation in Alaska.

Aviation in Alaska 1988-89

Month	Fatal Crashes (N=67)	Total Incidents (N=551)
January	1	25
February	3	19
March	3	31
April	5	37
May	8	55
June	10	77
July	7	64
August	13	77
September	11	91
October	2	33
November	1	20
December	3	22

Aviation in Alaska 1988-90

Phase of Operation	Fatal Crashes (N=67)	Total Incidents (N=551)
Standing	0	6
Taxi	1	28
Takeoff	8	129
Climb	5	16
Cruise	13	22
Descent	2	4
Approach	2	13
Landing	4	243
Maneuvering	26	68
Hover	0	6
Unknown	6	16

Location of NTSB Aviation Investigations, 1988-90 N = 551
Unknown Location = 30

