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Bulletin No. 25

December 18, 1992

A Deadly Season for Workers in Alaska - November 1992

An unusually high number of traumatic occupational fatalities occurred in Alaska during November 1992. Twenty-three (23) workers died as a result of traumatic injuries sustained in 13 work-related incidents, compared to November 1991, where a total of nine (9) workers died as a result of traumatic injuries in 5 work-related incidents.^{1,2} Multiple deaths occurred in 3 of the 1992 fatal incidents (23%); in 1991 multiple fatalities were observed in 2 incidents (22%).

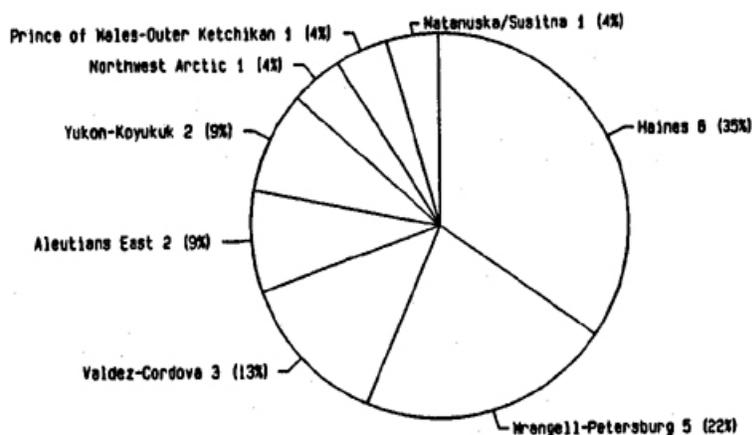
Class of Occupation	Percent of Fatalities
Military aviation	35%
Logging	17%
Marine Transportation	17%
Commercial aviation	13%
Commercial fishing	9%
Public transportation	4%
Wildlife management	4%

Type of Injury	Percent of Fatalities
Aviation-related high-impact crash	52%
Drowning	22%
Crushing	13%
Struck by object	4%
Suffocation	4%
Suicide	4%

Nearly 61% of deaths occurred in the southeast region, 26% occurred in the southcentral region, and 13% occurred in the northern region. The preponderance of deaths in the southeast reflects the occurrence of adverse weather conditions and presence of high-risk industries (logging, commercial and military aviation, commercial fishing, marine transportation).

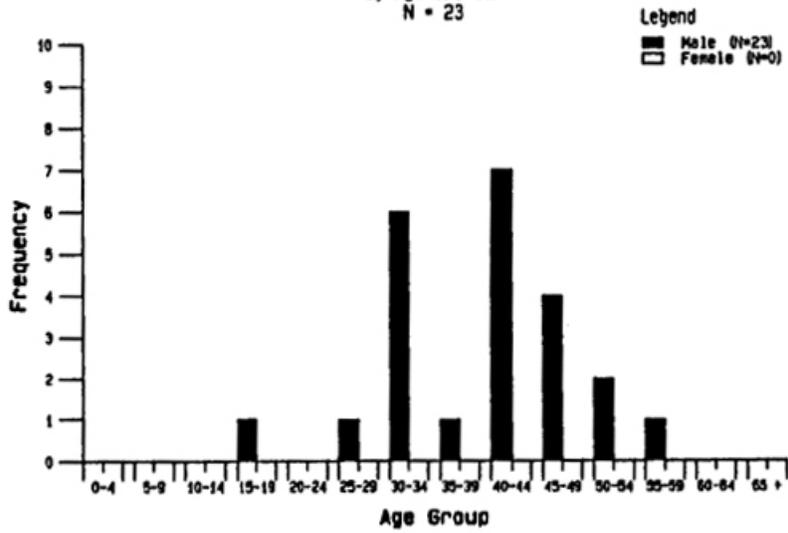
Traumatic Occupational Fatalities: November, 1992 by Geographic Distribution (FIPS)

N = 23



All victims were males. Ages ranged from 19 to 55 years. Race distribution was as follows: White (83%), Alaska Native (9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4%), Unknown (4%). These demographic characteristics mirror the age, race, and gender distribution of workers in high-risk industry worker populations in Alaska. Forty-eight percent of November's victims were Alaska residents, due to the large number of non-residents killed in a single military aircraft crash.

Traumatic Occupational Fatalities: November, 1992
 by Age and Sex
 N = 23



These deaths highlight factors critical to the prevention of death on the job. Adverse winter weather conditions encountered during November may have played a significant role in at least 12 of the 23 deaths (52%). Increased risk for worker injury and death exist in specific industries (aviation, commercial fishing, marine transportation, logging). Employers and workers in these and other industries should be aware of hazards exacerbated by winter weather conditions. Safety training and workplans should emphasize the impact of adverse seasonal conditions.

Of the five fatalities involving commercial fishing and marine transportation and that occurred on water, 4 victims (80%) were not using Personal Flotation Devices (PFD). Increased attention to winter hazards training and PFD use could result in a significant reduction in worker deaths.

¹Unpublished data, Occupational Injury Prevention Program, Section of Epidemiology

²Unpublished data, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Alaska Activity (Contributed by Gary Bledsoe, Occupational Injury Prevention Program, Section of Epidemiology)