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Aviation Crashes and Injuries -- Alaska, 1994

During 1994, there were 137 aircraft (126 airplanes, 10 helicopters, and 1 ultralight aircraft) involved in incidents investigated by the NTSB. A total of 318 persons, including 139 pilots and 179 passengers were involved in these incidents; 238 (75%) experienced no injury; 14 (4%) experienced minor injury; and 25 (8%) had serious injury.

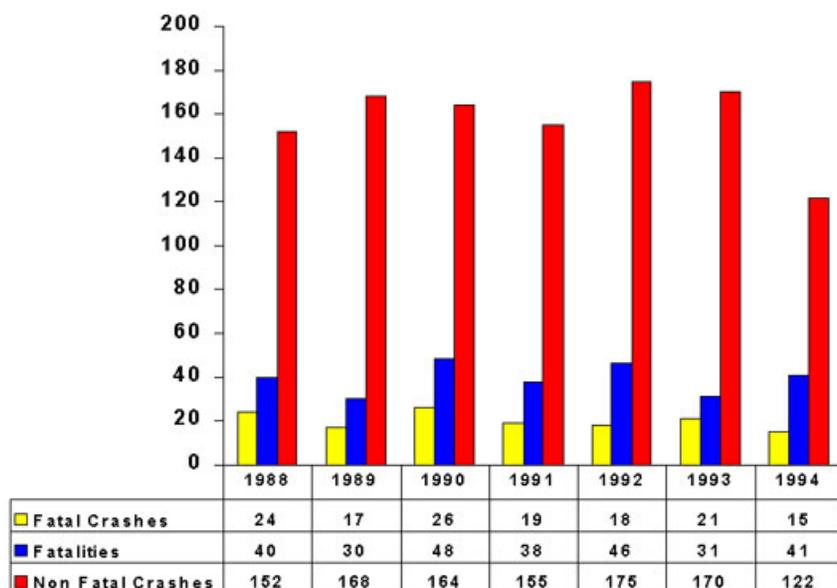
Fatal injuries occurred to 12 pilots and 29 passengers aboard 14 airplanes and 1 helicopter. Thirteen persons aboard these aircraft survived, 11 with serious and 2 with no injuries.

Although most incidents (64%) occurred during takeoff (21%) and landing (43%), only 13% of fatal events occurred during take-off and landing; 73% of the fatal events were associated with "cruise" and "maneuvering" phases of flight. In comparison, 76% of no-injury crashes occurred during takeoff (24%) and landing (52%), and only 5% were during "cruise" or "maneuvering."

Two-thirds of crashes, both total and fatal, occurred during the peak flying months of May through September. Eighty-eight percent of all incidents and 73% of fatal incidents occurred during the time period from 8:00 A.M. to 7:59 P.M.

1988-1994: Although the numbers of aircraft and persons involved in total incidents and aircraft involved in fatal crashes are the smallest since the surveillance system was established in 1988, the number of fatalities (41) in 1994 ranks third highest over the 7 year period. (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Aircraft Crashes in Alaska, 1988-1994, by Year

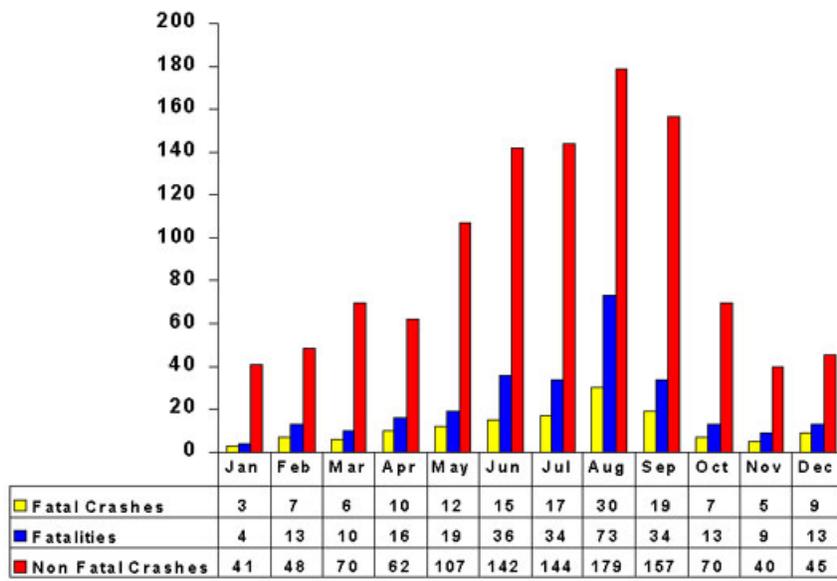


1995 (preliminary): To date, we have received NTSB reports on 76 crashes in 1995, the latest of which occurred on July 7th. Nine crashes had fatalities, including five crashes (with 19 deaths) during the three week period between June 20th and July 7th. A total of 25 persons have died in aviation crashes this year; 5 persons have been seriously injured; 10 persons have had minor injuries, and 138 persons were uninjured.

For the period 1988-1995, 1995 ranks highest in fatalities both for the month of June and for year to date.

Flying in August--A Time for Special Diligence: During 1988-1994 August has had the most total crashes (17%), fatal crashes (21%), and fatalities (27%) of any month. (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Aircraft Crashes in Alaska, 1988-1994, by Month



Many fatal crashes are related to errors in judgment and deficiencies in piloting and control of the aircraft. Examples include flight in or into adverse weather and flight at low altitude over hazardous terrain.

Alaska's rugged terrain and adverse weather are frequent factors in fatal aviation crashes. Many crashes might be prevented with better pre-flight and in-flight decision-making and avoidance of flight in conditions of adverse weather over hazardous terrain.

With the cooperation and assistance of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Section of Epidemiology maintains 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.

(Contributed by Bruce Chandler, MD, MPH and Duane Fridley, Analyst/Programmer IV, Section of Epidemiology.)