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Bulletin No. 10

February 21, 1996

OCCUPATIONAL FATALITIES IN ALASKA - 1995

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (AKDHSS), Division of Public Health (DPH), Section of Epidemiology, Occupational Injury Prevention Program, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Division of Safety Research (DSR), Alaska Field Station, worked cooperatively to collect and analyze occupational fatality data for 1995.

Of the 75 workers who died on the job in Alaska in 1995, 26 were in the military, 19 in the commercial fishing industry, and eight in the air transport industry. There were no work-related deaths in either the logging industry or the helicopter logging industry, two industries that have historically experienced disproportionately high numbers of occupational fatalities in Alaska.

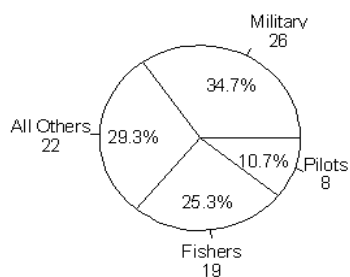
A total of 32 workers died in airplane crashes in Alaska in 1995, including 24 airmen who all died in one military airplane (AWACS) crash and eight civilian pilots. Another 20 workers drowned while on the job, including 15 commercial fishermen, two trappers, a fishing guide, a construction worker and a tug boat captain. Additionally six workers died as a result of motor vehicle crashes, of which four were truck drivers and two were soldiers.

NIOSH established a research field station in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1991 after identifying Alaska as the highest risk state in the U.S. for traumatic worker fatalities. The Section of Epidemiology established the Occupational Injury Prevention Program in 1992 to focus on preventing workplace fatalities and injuries, especially in construction, skilled trades, petrochemical, and other industrial settings.

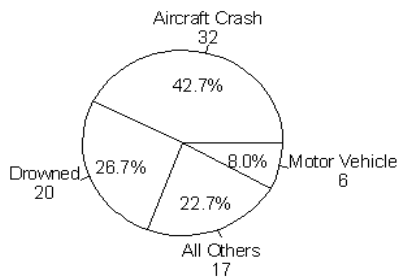
For the years 1980 through 1989, 34.8 worker deaths occurred for every 100,000 workers employed in Alaska. This workplace death rate is almost five times the U.S. rate (7.0 deaths per 100,000 workers) for the same period. The State and NIOSH are investigating worker deaths in Alaska to identify preventive measures that may be implemented to reduce the toll in Alaska and in other states and countries where workers face similar risks.

Due to the frequency of deaths related to commercial fishing, aviation and logging, NIOSH is focusing research efforts on these dangerous employment sectors. An international Helicopter Logging Safety Workshop and two international Fishing Industry Safety and Health (FISH) Workshops were sponsored by NIOSH in Alaska to help address these needs. A second Helicopter Logging Safety Workshop will take place in Ketchikan, Alaska, February 28-29, 1996, with international speakers and attendees from government, industry and academia.

Traumatic Occupational Fatalities, Alaska, 1995
by Occupation
N=75



Traumatic Occupational Fatalities, Alaska, 1995
by Circumstance
N=75



(Submitted by Gary Bledsoe, Occupational Injury Prevention Program, Section of Epidemiology, DPH, AKDHSS; Michael Klatt and Jennifer Lincoln, Alaska Field Station, DSR, NIOSH.)