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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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On-the-job death rate down in Alaska

Still one of the highest in the nation

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Although Alaska has consistently had one of the highest work-related fatality rates in the nation, several agencies have teamed up over the past decade to significantly reduce the incidence of work-related deaths in our state.

Using work-related fatality data, state and federal government agencies, industry, and nonprofit organizations identified hazards, and developed and implemented interventions to address them. Examples of such interventions include policy changes, engineering controls, education/training, and the use of personal protective equipment.

During 2000–2009, 379 work-related fatalities occurred in Alaska, a 42.5-percent decrease from the previous decade. For example, commercial fishing deaths declined from 202 in 1990–1999 to 111 in 2000–2009. Pilot deaths declined from 104 to 47.

“Interventions developed in Alaska since 2000 include stability checks for the Bering Sea crab fleet, and the Capstone program to improve pilots’ situational awareness” said Jennifer Lincoln, with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Alaska.

Employers and insurers spent nearly \$79 billion in 2008 on workers' compensation in the United States. Those expenditures represent only a portion of the costs borne by employers, workers, and society overall as a result of work-related injuries and fatalities.

“Progress has been made, but fatality rates continue to be high,” Lincoln said. “Further safety interventions are needed to combat the unique high-risk occupational hazards found in Alaska.”

Workers Memorial Day is observed each year on April 28 to recognize those workers who died or were injured on the job.

For more information, read the Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin at:
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_08.pdf.

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