



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (embargoed until April 5, 2011)

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Second in a series of five.

State to promote safety during National Public Health Week, April 4–10

Theme is *Safety is No Accident!*

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is placing special emphasis on safety during National Public Health Week, April 4–10. This year's theme is *Safety is No Accident*. Unintentional injuries — such as motor vehicle crashes, traumatic brain injury and falls — rank among the 10 leading causes of hospitalizations in Alaska.

A different aspect of injury prevention is highlighted each day throughout the week.

For Tuesday, April 5, our focus is on safety in the workplace, specifically in Alaska's fishing industry.

According to a 1997 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report, each year between 1990 and 1997 an average of 24 lives were lost in the Alaska commercial fishing industry. This represents an occupational fatality rate **20 times** the national average.

Over the past 20 years, the work of NIOSH in Alaska has helped reduce commercial fishing fatalities by nearly half. On average between 2000 and 2009, 13 fishermen were killed per year. Half of the deaths were caused by drowning as a result of vessel disasters (e.g., sinking, capsizing, fire, etc.). Another 31 percent were the result of falls overboard.

Recommendations from NIOSH that have helped reduce injuries and fatalities in the Alaska fishing industry include:

- taking a marine safety class at least once every five years;
- conducting monthly drills, such as abandon ship, flooding, and fire drills;
- heeding weather forecasts and avoiding fishing in severe sea conditions; and
- wearing a personal floatation device (PFD) on deck.

Results of the NIOSH PFD study are available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fishing.

For more information on workplace safety: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>.

For more safety ideas go to our state injury prevention website:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/injury_prevention/.

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Note to media NOT FOR RELEASE: As part of their effort to promote safety, employees with the state's injury prevention program have teamed up with KTVA CBS 11 in Anchorage to highlight a different injury prevention message each day Monday through Friday. Radio stations and newspapers statewide are still encouraged to help promote safety and reduce injuries by running these stories during the week.