

William J. Streur
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 5, 2012

Contact: Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032
gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov
Ann Potempa, (907) 269-7957, Cell (907) 230-4001
ann.potempa@alaska.gov

Study: Falls hospitalize nearly 9,000 Alaskans since 2005

Those over 65 have the highest rate

ANCHORAGE — Two studies published today by the state Section of Epidemiology show fall-related injuries as a frequent reason Alaskans are hospitalized. Close to 9,000 Alaskans were hospitalized with fall-related injuries between 2005 and 2009.

Highest rates were recorded for people over the age of 65, Alaska Native people, and those living in the Northern region of the state. Falls occurred most commonly in the home, and were most frequently due to a slip, trip or stumble. Among seniors, more than half of the hospitalizations were classified as serious or severe, and 5 percent of those hospitalized died during their hospital stay.

“This study gives us an increased understanding of how falls occur in order to help prevent them,” said Deborah Hull-Jilly, the study’s lead author and manager of the section’s Injury Surveillance Program. “Costs for treatment over the five years studied totaled more than \$193 million, so obviously preventing fall-related injury is an important mission for public health.”

To help prevent falls in the home:

- Keep stairways clean of clutter and well lit. Have a secure hand rail.
- Keep vinyl floors dry and secure loose rugs with double-sided tape.
- Have a lamp close to the bed, or a nightlight on in the bedroom and bathroom.
- Use a non-skid bath mat or bathtub decals. Have a secure hand rail around the tub.
- Keep the things you need most often on lower, easy-to-reach shelves.
- Wear ice grippers or use a walker when walking outside.

For more safety ideas, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/index.html>

The two EPI Bulletins can be accessed at:

- http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2012_01.pdf
- http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2012_02.pdf

###

DHSS is now on Twitter. Follow health updates at www.twitter.com/Alaska_DHSS.