

Conclusions and Future Directions

Using surveillance data as information for action, collaborative efforts in Alaska have been very successful in applying the insights gained from surveillance to the prevention of occupational mortality and serious injury. Specifically, epidemiologic analysis has been effectively applied toward reducing mortality in Alaska's rapidly expanding helicopter logging industry, and has played an important supportive role in tracking the continuing progress made in reducing the mortality rate in Alaska's commercial fishing industry. However, data has also shown that problems persist with prevention of falls overboard in the fishing industry, and other injuries related to the work processes on fishing vessels and fishing vessel stability. Interagency efforts are ongoing to address these factors.

Although mortality due to crashes of fixed-wing aircraft showed modest improvements for Alaska workers in 1997-1999, it persists as the leading cause of death for Alaska workers. To address these concerns, the Alaska Interagency Working Group for the Prevention of Occupational Injuries Aviation Committee is currently working on collaborative studies of crashes of single-engine, fixed-wing aircraft, and is mounting a major initiative in this area.

Results suggest that the extension of the NIOSH approach to occupational injury surveillance and prevention in Alaska to other locales, and application of these strategies to the full spectrum of occupational injury hazards, could have a broad impact on the reduction of occupational injuries. Some of the methodologic refinements presented here may be useful elsewhere: e.g., sequential layering of Haddon matrices provides a useful insight for injury prevention planning. This method should be widely applicable. With the combination of these successful collaborations and future projects, more interventions will be developed to continue to reduce these high numbers of occupational injuries and fatalities for Alaska's workers.



Photo 21: Cold weather construction site in Anchorage, Alaska