By SARA VERRELLI

Workplace Deaths in Alaska

Long-term decline in fatalities continues

Alaska's size, remoteness, and abundant fisheries make it especially dependent on boats and aicraft. Alaska has one of the nation's largest commercial fishing industries, and commuter and air taxi operators are the main link to much of the state, transporting people, cargo, and mail to more than 250 off-road villages. This means Alaska's workers often face different hazards than in the rest of the United States.

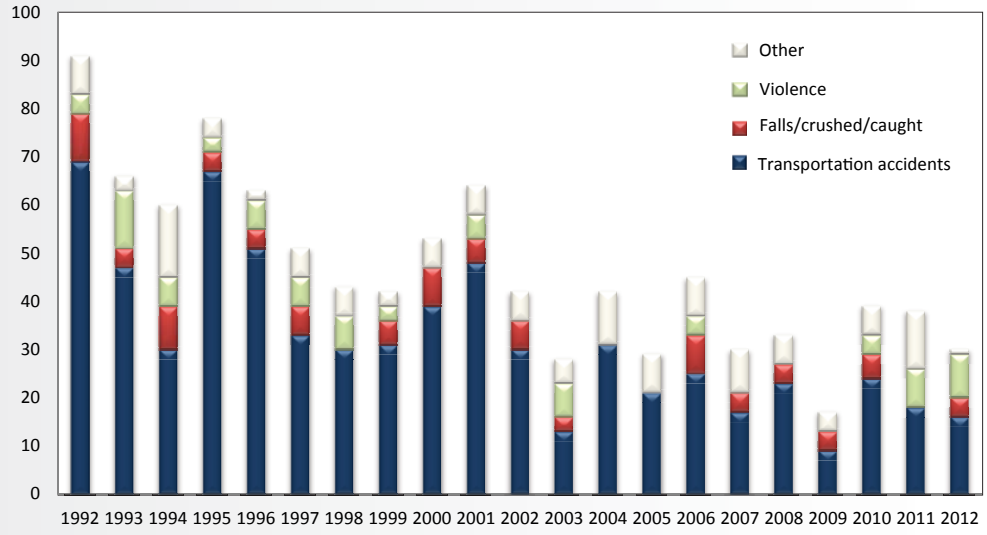
Alaska's working conditions have become safer overall than they were two decades ago, with 2012's fatalities roughly a third of what they were in 1992, the first year these cases were recorded. Alaska's rates have also declined relative to the U.S. rates over the past 20 years.

Down by two-thirds since 1992

The number of job fatalities in 2012 was also down from the prior year, but because of the state's relatively small labor force, a change from the prior year is unlikely to signal a trend. With such small numbers of annual deaths, a single accident might claim numerous lives at once, spiking the overall death rate for that year. However, looking at the totals over time shows a long-term decline. (See Exhibits 1 and 3.)

During 2012, 30 work-related deaths were recorded in Alaska, down from 38 in 2011. National fatalities declined about 7 percent over the same period, from 4,693 deaths to 4,383.

1 Workplace Deaths Decline Over Two Decades
Alaska, by cause, 1992 to 2012



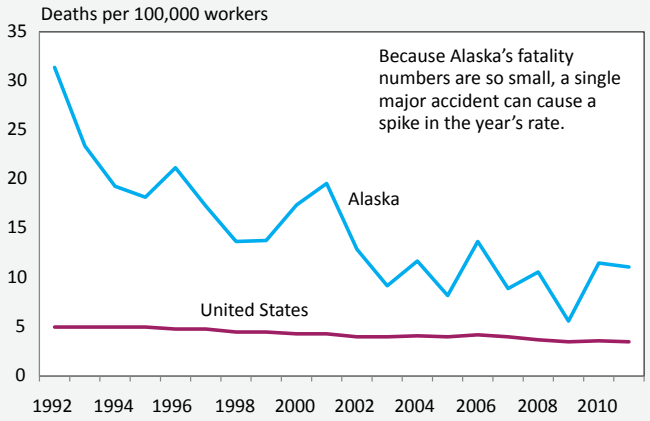
Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

2 Rates Per 100,000
By state, 2010–11*

	2011	2010
United States	**3.5**	**3.6**
Alabama	4	5.1
Alaska	**11.1**	**11.5**
Arizona	2.7	2.8
Arkansas	8	7.6
California	2.4	2.1
Colorado	3.9	3.7
Connecticut	2.2	3
Delaware	2.6	2.2
District of Columbia	3.1	5.6
Florida	2.9	3
Georgia	2.8	2.8
Hawaii	4.2	3.2
Idaho	5.1	4.9
Illinois	3.1	3.7
Indiana	4.5	4.2
Iowa	6.3	5.2
Kansas	5.9	6.5
Kentucky	5.4	4.1
Louisiana	6.3	6.2
Maine	4.2	3.3
Maryland	2.6	2.7
Massachusetts	2.2	1.8
Michigan	3.5	3.6
Minnesota	2.3	2.8
Mississippi	5.5	6.4
Missouri	4.9	4.2
Montana	11.2	8.2
Nebraska	3.9	6.3
Nevada	3.1	3.7
New Hampshire	1.2	0.9
New Jersey	2.6	2.2
New Mexico	6.6	4.9
New York (including NYC)	2.5	2.2
New York City only	2.2	2
North Carolina	3.7	3.5
North Dakota	12.4	8.5
Ohio	3.1	3.2
Oklahoma	5.5	6.3
Oregon	3.4	2.9
Pennsylvania	3.4	4
Rhode Island	1.5	1.9
South Carolina	4.5	3.6
South Dakota	6.7	8.8
Tennessee	4.5	5.4
Texas	4	4.4
Utah	3.3	3.4
Vermont	2.6	3.9
Virginia	3.4	2.8
Washington	1.9	3.4
West Virginia	5.9	13.7
Wisconsin	3.3	3.4
Wyoming	11.6	12.9

*For death rates per 100,000, 2011 is the most recent data year available.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

3 Alaska vs. U.S. Rates
Workplace deaths, 1992 to 2011*



*Although fatality numbers are available for 2012, the 2012 rates per 100,000 will not be released until spring 2014.
Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Alaska was one of 32 states where the number of worker deaths were down from the prior year. Fatalities increased in 16 states plus Washington, D.C., and remained steady in two others in 2012.

Workplace fatalities are typically measured in terms of deaths per every 100,000 workers to allow comparisons between areas with different population sizes, but those rates are not yet available for 2012. In 2011, Alaska had a rate of 11.1 per 100,000 workers, and the nation's rate was 3.5. Exhibit 2 shows how Alaska's workplace death rates in 2010 and 2011 compared to other states and the nation.

Safety in various Alaska industries

Though some jobs are naturally more dangerous than others, most work sites have some safety risks, such as inclement weather, heavy machinery, or slippery surfaces. Employers can't control the weather, but they can significantly reduce employee deaths through education, training, monitoring working conditions, and providing proper equipment — and these shifts in focus over time appear to have had an effect, especially in Alaska's most dangerous industries.

During the 1990s, Alaska's commercial fishing fatality rate dropped significantly because of safety procedures that addressed fishing-specific hazards. This decline in commercial fishing deaths is part of the reason for Alaska's overall downward trend since then. Implementing individual fishing quotas in the late 1990s further decreased deaths among seafood harvesters because prior to quotas, fishermen raced to get as many fish and crab as possible during openings

that often lasted just a few days. Tight openings and heavy competition, combined with unpredictable weather, often led to more accidents.

Alaska's air transportation has also become safer, mainly due to advancements in aviation technology over time and more safety programs. An example is the Capstone Program, funded by the Federal Aviation Administration, which focused on safety in the state's rural areas by implementing automated weather information systems, global positioning systems, and terrain avoidance hardware and software to prevent crashes.

Transportation accidents the main cause everywhere

By industry, half of Alaska's workplace deaths in 2012 were in transportation and fishing — 53.3 percent. The federal government and construction came next at 4 and 3 percent respectively. (See Exhibit 4.)

By the type of fatality, transportation incidents have been the No. 1 cause of worker deaths in Alaska since the study began. While most transportation-related deaths in the U.S. as a whole are on highways, about 69 percent in Alaska involve boats or aircraft. (See Exhibit 5.)

Alaska's second-most frequent cause was violence and other injuries caused by people or animals, at 30 percent. These cases include homicides, assaults, and intentional self-inflicted injury or suicide. The third leading cause, at 13.3 percent, was being struck, caught in, or compressed by objects or equipment. This category includes falls.

Most workplace deaths are white males

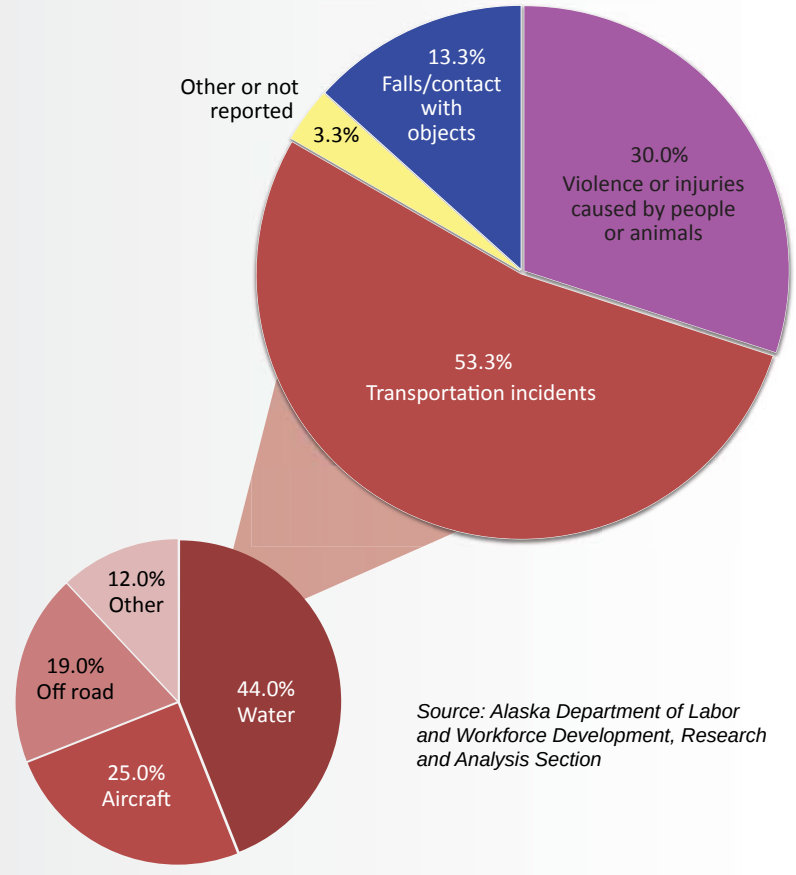
The idea that Alaska has far more men than women is a persistent myth — we do have more, though by a small margin — but worker fatalities among men dwarf those involving women. Almost all of the deceased workers were men, at 93 percent, and the U.S. rate was barely lower at 92 percent.

4 Workplace Deaths by Industry
Alaska, 2011 and 2012

Industry	2012 Deaths	2011 Deaths
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	9	11
Transportation and Warehousing	6	6
Federal Government	4	3
Construction	3	3
Accommodation and Food Service	1	3
Professional and Business Services	1	0
Administrative and Waste Serivces	1	0
Other	5	12
Total	**30**	**38**

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

5 Most Are Vehicle Accidents
Workplace deaths by cause, Alaska, 2012



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Men are more likely to work in the most dangerous jobs in commercial fishing, aviation, and construction.

These workers were also mostly white. In Alaska, 63 percent of the workers who died in 2012 were white and non-Hispanic, compared to 68.5 percent nationally.

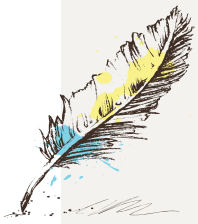
Workers between 25 and 54 years old — the prime working years — accounted for 43 percent of work-related deaths in 2012, with more deaths among older workers. Nationally, workers in this age group accounted for 59 percent.

About the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began conducting annual surveys in 1972 to estimate injuries, illnesses, and fatalities at work. Subsequent analyses showed traumatic occupational fatalities were underreported, and widely varying estimates raised concern about using a sampled survey to estimate deaths. In response, BLS and state agencies developed the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, implementing it in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in 1992.

CFOI maintains a complete count of worker fatalities and analyzes them in detail. The program relies primarily on death certificates, newspaper articles, reports from federal and state agencies, and workers' compensation records. It includes employer characteristics, fatality details, and demographic information about the deceased while keeping any identifying information strictly confidential. Because these data are so specific, they're especially useful to policy makers, researchers, concerned employers and workers, unions, trade organizations, and safety equipment manufacturers.

CFOI records any job-related death in Alaska, even if the worker was not a resident or didn't work for an Alaska company. These deaths include homicides, suicides, transportation accidents, contact with objects, falls, and exposure to harmful substances. Natural deaths that happen at work, such as heart attacks, are not part of the record. CFOI also excludes work-related illnesses.



This month in Trends history

DECEMBER 1965

Business activities trailed dropping temperatures throughout the state as weather forced seasonal slowups. Oil production in the Cook Inlet offshore oil fields began with the dedication of the Kenai pipeline, jointly owned by several major oil companies. The petroleum industry expects to spend close to $130 million for further drilling and development expansion in the state during 1966.

Other highlights from 1965:

- The state economy in 1965, invigorated by earthquake reconstruction projects and stimulated by private expansion interests, witnessed unprecedented development in various sectors of Alaska business to meet demands of a steadily growing population.
- Each monthly period during the year recorded higher total workforce numbers than its comparable predecessors.
- Personal income continued climbing as Alaska maintained rank as one of the fastest-growing states.
- Immigrants in record-breaking numbers rushed to the state early in the year looking for work, and continued to deluge union and Employment Service local offices during the season.
- Tourist activities surpassed previous levels, and the Marine Transportation System was pressed to accommodate intensive summer travel.
- In June and July, canneries in Bristol Bay operated at high speed in an effort to process an excellent red salmon run, but total catch figures did not reflect this record due to disappointing runs in other areas. Even so, the salmon catch was well over the 10-year average. King crab production showed signs of leading previous marks, with final figures not yet compiled.
- The initial program of the Neighborhood Youth Corps throughout the state provided work for young people, and swelled government employment figures above prior years.
- The value of exports, the bulk of which were timber products to Japan, exceeded last year's for the first nine months.

In summary, 1965 was a record year in nearly all sectors, with Alaska sharing in the vigorous economic activity that occurred nationwide.

Alaska Economic Trends has been published in Alaska since 1961. Historical articles are available at labor.alaska.gov/trends as far back as 1978, and complete issues are available from 1994.