

# Fatalities at the Workplace Decline in 1994

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by Talitha Lukshin

**S**ixty workplace fatalities occurred in Alaska in 1994, according to the most recent results of the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). The fatality count has declined steadily since 1992, the first year the census was compiled. (See Figure 1.) The CFOI records workplace fatalities of the self-employed, civilian and military government, as well as all private sector wage and hour employees.

## **Deaths due to exposure increase**

Deaths due to exposure to gases such as carbon monoxide, argon, and freon rose to six in 1994. Cases from violent acts dropped by half from 1993. More importantly, homicides dropped to four, down from 12 in the prior year. Two of the four homicides in 1994 involved a robbery motive.

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### Fishing industry fatalities continue decline

While deaths in the commercial fishing industry declined to fourteen in 1994, this activity retained the highest fatality count of all state industries. Much of the decline in commercial fishing fatalities has been attributed to new safety regulations implemented by the U.S. Coast Guard. The most dramatic change was the drop in deaths related to vessels sinking.

### Mining and construction workplace fatalities increase in 1994

Three of the four mining fatalities were in the oil and gas sector, with one in hard rock

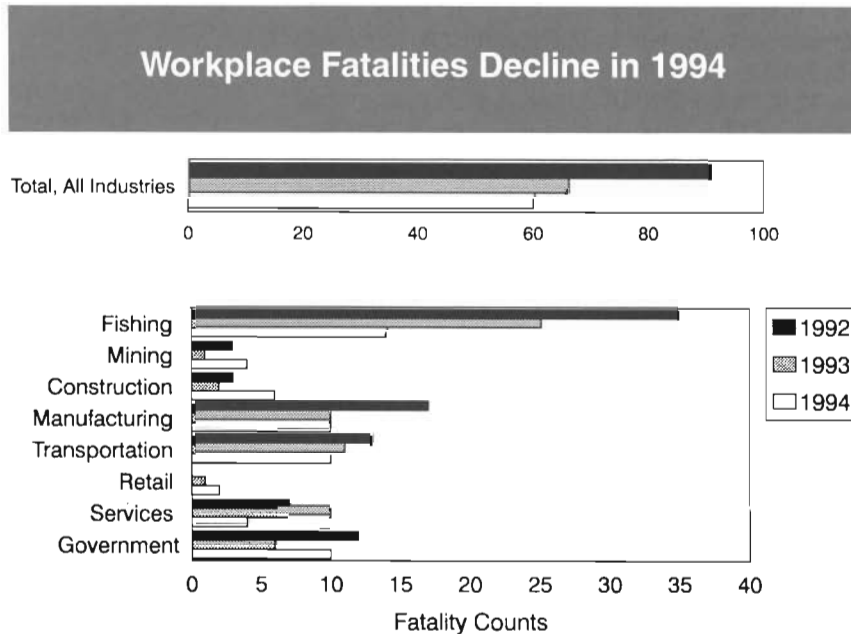
mining. Two workers were struck by falling objects from above and the other was killed in an explosion. Three construction workers died in separate accidents involving collapsing structures. A confined space asphyxiation occurred on the slope when a welder entered a pipe being purged with argon gas. A mechanic was backed over when he climbed under a truck.

### Logging fatalities drop, but seafood processing deaths increase

No accidents were reported by the aerologging operations in Alaska during 1994. However, as in the past, logging fatalities occurred due to workers being struck by a falling tree or a rolling log. Working around vehicles also continued to be a risk in this industry. Of the four deaths for seafood processing in 1994, three occurred to the offshore fleet. A fire aboard the *M/V All Alaskan* took one life, but 132 crew were safely evacuated. Another vessel incident involved an asphyxiation due to exposure to freon; and on a processor, a deckhand fell over-board. The death at a shore-based facility occurred when a worker's clothing caught in the equipment he was cleaning, causing a mechanical asphyxiation.

The complete "1994 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries" will be available in the publication *Occupational Injury and Illness Information, Alaska 1994*, to be released later this year. Copies may be obtained through: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section, P.O. Box 25501, Juneau, Alaska 99802-5501; email: Talitha\_Lukshin@labor.state.ak.

Figure • 1



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

*Occupational Injury and Illness, Alaska 1992-1993*, is now available from the Alaska Department of Labor. Providing baseline state and national data, the publication presents five-year rate trends by each major Alaskan industry. Specific occupations with the highest number of reported nonfatal cases are shown within each industry analysis. The types of events leading to these cases are also presented. Fatal occupational injury cases are discussed with detailed tables by year with the events, occupations and industry. Copies of the publication are available by writing or calling the Research and Analysis Section, P.O. Box 25501, Juneau, Alaska 99802-5501, 465-4500.