

Embargoed until Wednesday, April 26th at 9:15am ET

Date: Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Time: 9:15 – 9:35 AM

Concurrent Session J2: Injury Concurrent

Room: Concurrent Session Room

Moderators: Debra Houry and Katie Fowler

Title: Fatal Injuries in the Alaska Logging Industry — 1991–2014

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Background: During 2006–2014, the fatality rate for the U.S. logging industry was 23 times the national all-occupations rate. Alaska has among the highest work-related fatality rates across multiple industries; logging injuries have not been examined since the early 1990s. We investigated fatalities in the Alaska logging industry during 1991–2014 to assess industry safety.

Methods: To estimate annual fatality rates, we used fatality data from the Alaska Occupational Injury Surveillance System and workforce data from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADLWD). We estimated rates as fatalities/100,000 positions (individual jobs) and calculated 5-year moving averages of annual rates to examine trends. Fatality characteristics were analyzed.

Results: During 1991–2014, a total of 51 fatalities were reported among an annual average of 840 positions. Annual fatality rate range was 0/100,000–717/100,000 positions. A plot of the 5-year moving average of annual fatality rates by year was parabolic, decreasing from 1993 (341.6/100,000 positions) to 2005 (0/100,000 positions), then increasing to a high in 2010 (383.2/100,000 positions). Analyses of fatality characteristics including source, event, nature, and affected body part(s) did not indicate a mechanism for this rate reversal.

Conclusions: After declining during 1991–2005, Alaska logging industry fatality rates rose during 2006–2014; rate for this 9-year period was twice the U.S. logging industry rate and 42 times the national all-occupations rate. In response, the Alaska Division of Public Health is collaborating with ADLWD and the University of Alaska–Anchorage to develop a safety education program; our investigation findings will be used to guide recommendations. Changes in size, structure, and operation of Alaska logging companies will be examined as potential contributors to the rate reversal.