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Stakeholder Input and Cultural Considerations in Addressing Behavioural Factors in a Unique Agricultural Work Population (Commercial Shrimpers)*

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Agriculture is among the most hazardous of industries with a high risk for fatal and non-fatal injuries and work-related disease conditions. One hundred ten (110) American farm workers are crushed to death annually by tractor rollovers and over 100 children are killed on farms. The commercial fishing trades are one component of American agriculture and are among the most dangerous jobs in the world. Casualties that occur in these jobs are often the result of a combination of human factors, machinery and equipment, and the environmental elements at sea. Human factors like fatigue, inexperience, and behavioural components such as non-use of safety practices and equipment are particularly important in morbidity and mortality outcomes in the commercial fishing trades. For select groups, these human aspects may be strongly influenced by cultural factors.

Studying these groups and designing interventions which can change some of these behavioural elements and provide for the transfer of research findings into effective prevention practices requires an approach which relies heavily on the development of community trust and stakeholder input, while considering the cultural factors which may significantly impact success. Such an approach is formative and often slow and incremental, but more likely to yield desired outcomes.

An example of such a study population is the fleet of shrimpers in the Gulf Coast port region of Galveston, Texas. This group is different in several respects from commercial fishermen in other U.S. Coast Guard regions including being comprised primarily of Vietnamese. Working closely with representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, a convenience survey of these shrimpers was undertaken to characterize the population, followed by a series of focus groups to address potential approaches for educational interventions which might influence safety behaviours. Key findings revealed in excess of 50% of those surveyed speaking little or no English with over half the group considering the job to be very safe to neutral and 85% identifying important personal behaviours as potential contributors to accidents. The focus groups demonstrated the importance of conducting hands-on training in Vietnamese by experienced fisherman with a focus on vessel captains as workgroup leaders. These findings illustrate

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the importance of securing stakeholder input and considering cultural factors in the design of workplace interventions which focus on changes in safety behaviours.

This presentation will illustrate some of the dynamics which must be considered among unique agricultural work populations as illustrated by the experience of the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention, and Education relative to the Galveston shrimpers. Preliminary findings among the shrimpers of the port of Galveston region will be presented.

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