

Conway G, Yadava YS [2009]. Surveillance and prevention of mortality in small-scale fishermen in Southern Asia. In: Proceedings of the Fourth International Fishing Industry Safety and Health Conference, May 11-14, 2009, Reykjavik, Iceland. Cincinnati, OH: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

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### **Background**

Over 30 million individuals work in commercial fishing operations worldwide. Although <1% of the worldwide workforce, fisherman account for >7% of worker mortality. Fishing-related mortality data and prevention activities may be relatively complete for the developed nations, but often quite limited for developing nations, due to shortages of infrastructure, critical expertise, and resources. The lack of complete and accurate data is of great concern: understanding the events is a critical step toward preventing them. In early 2004, NIOSH and BOBP undertook enumeration and analysis for deaths among fishermen in Indian coastal states.

### **Methods**

Data were abstracted from insurance claims files, which included death records, medical examiner reports, insurance claim processing data, search and rescue (SAR), and other jurisdictional agency information.

### **Results**

513 national death insurance records were abstracted: over 40% of these events were drownings, another 10% were missing at sea: and the remainder involving a wide variety of circumstances. A detailed analysis was conducted on 128 records from Tamil Nadu state (with some overlap with the other dataset). The leading cause of death therein was drowning (43 deaths, 34%), most (22) due to falls overboard, and 8 (in 6 incidents) due to capsize by large waves. Motor vehicle (MV) incidents killed 39 (30%) of deceased fishermen, most on 2 wheeled vehicles. Also noteworthy was a single incident with 7 deaths, due to a large vessel colliding with and sinking a fishing vessel.

### **Conclusion**

These data provide information for action, for preventive efforts, supporting fishermen always wearing flotation while working and consider wearing helmets on 2 wheelers and seatbelts (when available) when in larger MVs. This major project has high potential for increasing national and international understanding and fostering prevention of fishing-related deaths in south Asia.