

the cases to study the possible correlations between contaminant exposure and birth weight or child development. As conclusions, in the case of exposure to environmental contaminants there is a need for harmonization of study designs as much as possible before the risks for human health can be scientifically evidence-based way to estimate. However, we need to have the estimated “safety” limits or cut-off-points to be used in every day-life, e.g. for the most sensitive groups of exposed populations, pregnant women and children. New methods for risk estimation and characterization are needed for giving e.g. dietary recommendations.

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CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE BOATING SAFETY IN ARCTIC ALASKA: USE OF WHITE FLOAT COATS IN WHALING COMMUNITIES

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Introduction and Background. Alaska Native people have drowning rates twenty times the national rate, over half occurring during boating activities. Alaska Native whale hunters historically have not worn flotation gear; they generally wear white as arctic camouflage while hunting, and white flotation gear has not been available. Alaska has 13 northern communities that are members of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), allowing them to participate in whale hunting. Each community has from 50 to 200 residents participating in whale hunting.

Methods. To determine whether whale hunters would accept and use flotation gear if it were available in white, we asked whaling crews in all AEWC communities if they would participate in pilot testing the flotation gear. Captains provided crewmember size information. We obtained white flotation coats from Mustang Survival, who made them as a special order, and distributed them to each crew. We surveyed crews before and after use of the white gear to determine perception of risk, opinions of comfort of flotation gear, and frequency flotation gear use.

Results and Discussion. The pilot test was two-stage: in 2010, eight crews participated from Wales, Wainwright, and Barrow, and in 2011 two crews from each of the remaining AEWC communities participated. Final surveys will be collected from crews this spring. Preliminary findings indicate the white floatcoats worked well during whaling hunts: ice did not adhere as it does to traditional cotton parkas, and the coat's belt provided easy access to knives needed for safety. Some hunters requested improvements: the exterior material was noisy at colder temperatures, and the hood was too shallow for sufficient face protection.

Conclusion. If white floatcoats are available to the community, whaling crews will wear them during hunts.

We will work with other agencies to get white float coats readily available to Arctic hunters.

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COMMERCIAL FISHING IN ALASKA, 2000–2009

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CDC/NIOSH/APRO

Background. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recently completed a study of commercial fishing fatalities in the United States. The purpose of the study was to identify the most hazardous fisheries around the country and to describe the unique safety issues in each region. The cold water and remote fishing grounds found in Alaska make it a dangerous place to work. However, significant improvements in safety have been realized due to focused prevention efforts on high-risk fisheries.

Methods. The Commercial Fishing Incident Database was used to identify all fatal occupational traumatic injuries that occurred in Alaska during 2000–2009. Data are available on person, vessel and environment.

Results. During 2000–2009, 133 commercial fishermen died in Alaska. Half (67) of the deaths were caused by drowning following vessel disasters (e.g. sinking, capsizing) in which the crew was forced to abandon ship. Another 31% (41) of fatalities were the result of falls overboard. In addition there were 25 fatalities resulting from other causes (e.g. struck by gear, fall from height, diving). Fatalities occurred most frequently while fishing for salmon (39, 29%). Falls overboard caused the most deaths among salmon fishermen followed by drownings after skiff capsizings. However, the Bering Sea Aleutian Island Freezer Trawl fleet had the highest fishery specific fatality rate of 340/100,000 FTE/year.

Conclusions. Tailored prevention programs for specific high-risk fisheries in Alaska such as Bering Sea crab have resulted in safety improvements since the 1990s. In addition to these prevention programs, safety training for fishermen is available and very affordable in Alaska. Progress has been made, but there remains a need for continued safety interventions to combat the unique work hazards found in Alaska particularly in salmon fishing operations utilizing skiffs and in the freezer trawl fleet operating in the Bering Sea.

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INJURY RATES IN SOUTHWEST ALASKA: THE IMPACT OF VARIATIONS IN INCOME FROM COMMERCIAL FISHING

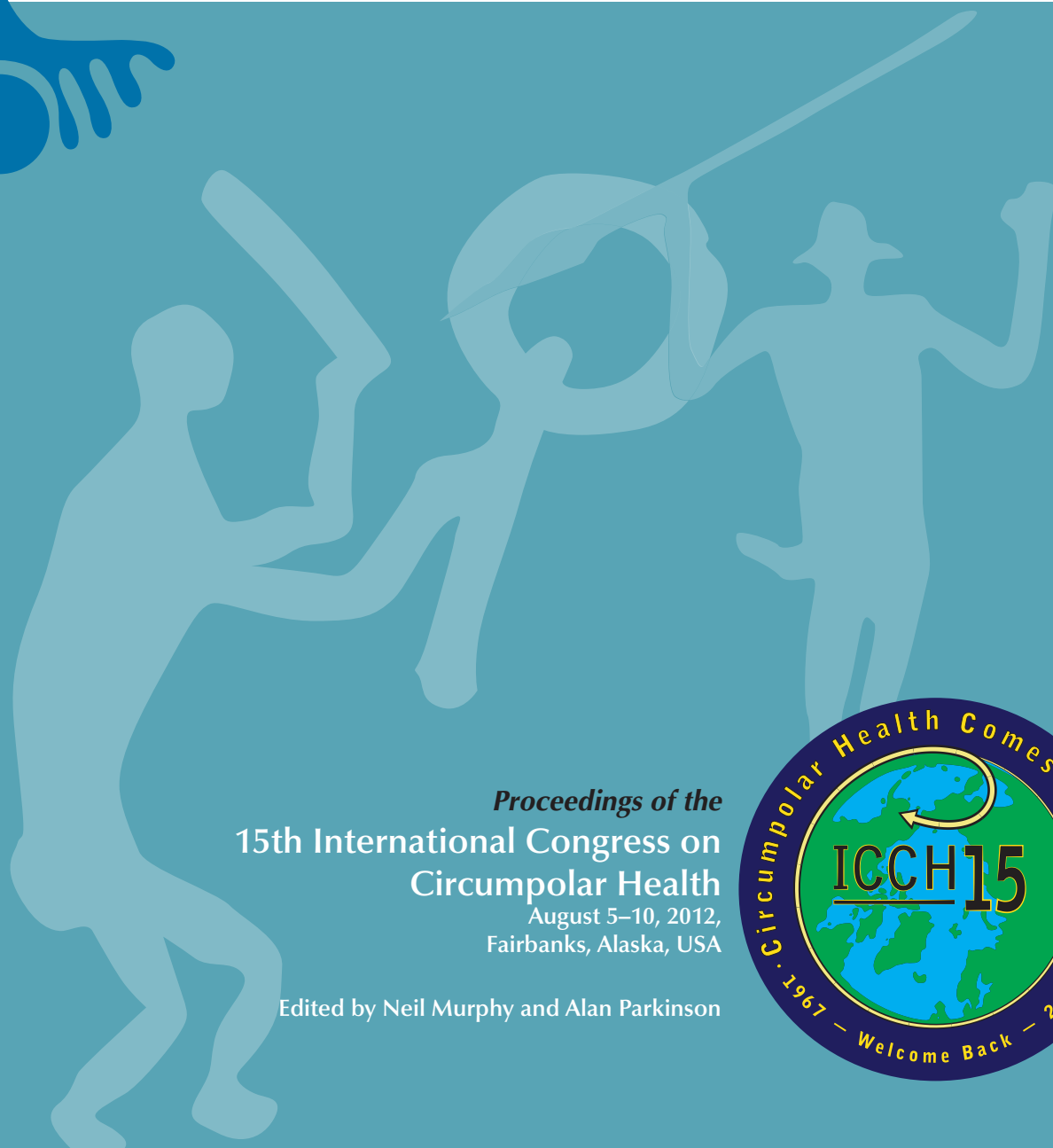
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Studies from several countries have demonstrated increased rates of serious injury during harsh economic

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