



Alaska FACE Facts

Occupational Injury Prevention Program
Section of Epidemiology
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services

April 1997

Worker Dies After Being Struck in the Chest by a Grease Fitting (Zirk)



Incident: A worker died from injuries after he was struck in the chest by a grease fitting (zirk) when he attempted to remove it from a rudder shaft tube. The victim was completing routine maintenance of a ship steering system and was pumping grease into the shaft tube using a manual grease gun. Normally, excess grease emerged from a grease channel when the tube was filled to capacity. In this case, the outlet channel was blocked. The victim assumed the zirk had malfunctioned when no grease emerged from the outlet channel and the grease connector would not allow additional grease to be delivered into the shaft. The victim positioned himself in front of the shaft and began to unscrew the fitting. Grease fittings are used on many different types of equipment in various industries including fishing, agriculture, construction/excavation, and petroleum. Manual grease guns can deliver 10,000 psi while smaller single-handed guns can deliver 3,500 psi.

Recommendations:

- Ensure training for procedures and provide written guidelines for reference when problems occur;
- Exercise extreme caution when removing a connector from a potentially pressurized system and encourage workers to actively participate in workplace safety.

The Alaska Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program is administered by the Occupational Injury Prevention Program (OIPP), Section of Epidemiology, Department of Health and Social Services under a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The purpose of FACE is to identify conditions that increase the possibility of work-related fatal injury and provide recommendations for countermeasures that can be developed and implemented by the employer.

**For more information or a copy of this FACE report,
contact the Occupational Injury Prevention Office**

(907) 269-8000

or visit our website

<http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/programs/injury>