



# Alaska FACE Facts

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

June 1997

## Bulldozer operator presumed drowned

**Incident:** On April 13, 1997, a 46-year-old male heavy equipment operator was presumed drowned when a bulldozer he was operating submerged in an adjacent tailing pond. The victim was in the process of removing a rock layer from the top of a tailing impoundment structure. Due to the limited experience of the victim, he was assigned a work area farthest from the tailing pond. At the time of the incident, it was surmised that the operator was repositioning the bulldozer to continue removing the rock layer. As the bulldozer was moving back, it proceeded over the edge of the embankment, down the slope of the impoundment structure, and into the pond covered with 2 to 3 inches of ice. Emergency rescue services were notified immediately after discovery of the incident. The bulldozer was located in approximately 20 feet of heavily silted water. Divers were unable to locate and recover the operator.

### Recommendations:

- incorporate a clearly defined entry level curriculum into the training program for inexperienced operators;
- ensure that all operators receive adequate equipment-specific training and supervision including emergency arrest techniques;
- consider implementing a training checklist to ensure all operation and safety aspects have been reviewed with and understood by trainees.

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>**