Workers die at sea and in front of machines

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LAFAYETTE — Accidents involving water transport, machinery and falls killed nearly half the workers who died on the job between 1990 and 1996 in Acadiana.

And statistically, the most dangerous Acadiana parishes in which to work were Vermilion and St. Mary, where the rate of workplace death is nearly three times the rate for all of Louisiana.

St. Landry, St. Martin, Evangeline and Acadia parishes all had significantly lower rates of on-the-job deaths.

Those statistics come from information compiled from death certificate statistics. The 1990-96 death certificates identify 122 Acadiana deaths as having occurred at work.

The statistics probably undercount the number of fatalities. Death certificates categorize highway deaths separately from workplace deaths. Also, the statistics don’t count Louisiana offshore workers killed outside state waters.

According to the 1990-96 statistics:

- Water transport accidents killed 23 workers, or 19 percent of the total. Twenty of the 55 deaths in Vermilion and St. Mary fit into this category. Drownings that didn’t result from transport mishaps — diving accidents and failed rescues, for example — accounted for another eight deaths regionwide.

- Machinery-related accidents killed 17 Acadiana workers, or 14 percent of workplace fatality victims. Falls accounted for 13 percent of the fatalities, and falling objects killed 10 percent of the victims. Electrocution killed another 9 percent.

- Nine people died in job-related aircraft accidents. Two died in crop dusting accidents. The others died were 25 or younger. One victim, who died in a 1995 electrical accident in Jeff Davis, was only 15. The oldest victim, who died in a 1992 Vermilion farm machinery accident, was 75.

- Assaults with weapons killed seven workplace victims, or 6 percent. Nationally, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration says assaults account for about 19 percent of workplace deaths.

- Among the seven assault victims, four were women. They and a woman who committed suicide in 1996 in St. Landry were the only women among the 122 victims.

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\text{Parish} & \text{Rate} \\
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\text{Acadia} & 7.07 \\
\text{Evangeline} & 11.78 \\
\text{Iberia} & 21.47 \\
\text{J. Davis} & 22.59 \\
\text{Lafayette} & 14.47 \\
\text{St. Landry} & 8.60 \\
\text{St. Martin} & 11.10 \\
\text{St. Mary} & 47.97 \\
\text{Vermilion} & 53.39 \\
\text{Acadiana} & 20.35 \\
\text{Louisiana} & 18.39 \\
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SOURCE: Death certificate statistics, Louisiana Office of Public Health

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