



## Worker Training Program: Alaska

*A National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Superfund-Related Activity*

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) annually funds about 30 health and safety courses for 1,300 workers in Alaska. Recipients of NIEHS grants lead training to prepare workers to handle hazardous materials and respond to disasters in their communities.



### Courses include:

- Basic Superfund Site Worker and Site Worker Refresher
- Confined Space Rescue
- Emergency Response Incident Command
- General Construction and General Industry Safety
- Hazard Communication
- Hazardous Waste Operations
- Lead Awareness
- Mass Casualty Incident Triage
- Radiation and Nuclear Awareness

## Training Highlights

### Job Training in Rural Alaska

The NIEHS [Environmental Career Worker Training Program](#) (ECWTP) offers job training to disadvantaged and underrepresented workers, many from communities with environmental justice concerns. ECWTP has a nationwide [economic impact](#) through delivery of pre-employment and health and safety training in underserved communities.

In Alaska, the Western Region Universities Consortium, a WTP grantee, partners with the Zender Environmental Health and Research Group to help support ECWTP recruitment, training, and employment opportunities.

Zender manages the Rural Alaska Community Education Job Training (RACEJT) Program, which provides training for residents in remote Alaska Native Villages to conduct environmental remediation work in their villages.

University of Washington (UW), part of the consortium, regularly delivers key training courses for RACEJT, such as hazardous waste worker, construction safety, confined space, first aid, and spill response.

As a direct result of the training, graduates gain employment as landfill operators, environmental technicians, emergency spill responders, sediment and erosion control leads, water and soil samples, backhaul materials specialists, among others. Recent training reached residents across the state in Anvik, Kongiganak, Hoonah, and Klawock.

### Environmental Training for Native Villages

High transportation and infrastructure costs in Alaska make certain safety practices, such as hauling dangerous waste out of the region, cost-prohibitive and hazardous. To address



*Photo courtesy of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation*



*Photo courtesy of WRUC*

### About the Worker Training Program

WTP funds nonprofit organizations to provide health and safety training for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste at work or while assisting with emergency response. WTP was initiated under the Hazardous Substance Basic Research and Training Program authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660a).

Under these NIEHS Superfund-related activities, WTP grantees provide trainings across the country through the [Hazardous Waste](#), [Hazmat Disaster](#), and [Environmental Career Worker Training Programs](#).

**For more information, visit** [www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp).

these challenges, the Western Regional Universities Consortium provides courses to Alaska tribes through UW. These courses teach workers how to protect themselves, help improve emergency and disaster response, and **build capacity** in Native American communities.

UW works with the following organizations to provide training to over 150 workers every year:

**Native Village of Saint Michael**

Village residents in Saint Michael conduct environmental clean-up work in partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense and remove tar from an old Army base. Most residents are Yup'ik. To work on the site, they must have Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training and take refreshers each year. UW delivers these required courses for them.

**Alaska Forum Environmental Training and Apprenticeship Program**

The Alaska Forum provides industry-recognized trainings and job placement assistance for workers in remote Native American communities. The organization conducts virtual and in-person basic HAZWOPER and refresher trainings to support a skilled workforce that meets the requirements of environmental and natural resource-related jobs. Recent trainings included hazardous waste worker courses in Naknek, located on the northeast side of Bristol Bay in Southwest Alaska.

**Community College Training**

Every year, more than 1,000 fishers and associated industrial personnel receive oil spill and emergency response and hazardous waste operations training through Prince William Sound College. Since 1998, this college has assisted Alyeska Pipeline Service Company in conducting annual oil spill response training. The training is sponsored by the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training/ National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education, a WTP grantee.

The college delivers a fishing vessel training program that helps individuals, many of whom are native or indigenous



*Photo courtesy of Prince William Sound College*

**Personal Story from Rural Alaska**

Brandon Fleming, from Anvik, came unemployed to Zender's RACEJT program. Anvik is a subsistence community on the lower Kuskokwim River with a population of 79 Ingalik Athbascan peoples. After receiving NIEHS-funded training and graduating from the program, Brandon was employed by the City of Anvik Landfills, which is managed by the Anvik Tribal Council. He collected water samples at the Anvik and Yukon rivers, mapped the locations of sampling sites, and calculated baseline data for annual water testing campaigns. Brandon also sorts household batteries, removes e-waste from landfills, recycles cans and bottles, and backhauls broken household appliances for shipment out of the village. He works with the community to prevent improper disposal of old appliances in landfills where they could cause environmental damage.

people, gain oil sector employment in the area. The vessel crews are considered "first responders" to an oil spill and are trained each year to refresh their skills in deploying, operating, and maintaining equipment. On-water drills prepare crew members to respond to a major oil spill at any time. Training is offered in six ports across Alaska — Kodiak, Homer, Seward, Whittier, Valdez, and Cordova — on more than 420 fishing vessels. First aid courses are also provided.

**Hazardous Materials Technical Skills for Firefighters**

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) conducts emergency response and hazardous materials training in communities nationwide, including those that are rural, remote, or do not have the resources found in larger urban centers. This training often fills gaps in requirements for municipalities and first responder agencies.

IAFF provides 40-hour confined space rescue and 80-hour hazmat technician courses in Anchorage.

"The hands-on experience with the very knowledgeable instructors was extremely beneficial," said a trainee. "I felt that they were able to dramatically increase our knowledge, skills, and abilities."



*Photo courtesy of IAFF*