

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE  
PORTLAND AREA  
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

***Injury Prevention Program***

Injuries are the leading cause of death for young American Indians and Alaska Natives (under the age of 44), and are the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among all ages. Due to this disproportionate burden of injuries on the AI/AN population, prevention is the key to improved health outcomes and quality of life.

The Portland Area Division of Environmental Health Services has a role in preventing unintentional injuries as follows:

- Development of injury prevention programs and strategies, conducting severe injury surveillance and investigations, and establishing community action groups and initiatives.
- Coordinating the program, including compilation and evaluation of data from police, emergency medical service, and Tribal clinics; providing consultant services on questions specific to injury control; promoting and implementing intervention strategies.

**RISK ASSESSMENT AND HAZARD CONTROL**

The DEHS assesses and investigates home and recreational environments and environmental factors related to traffic safety in order to identify and control hazards that contribute to unintentional injuries and fatalities.

- Injuries at home and at play are not accidents. They can be prevented. The IHS works to prevent leading causes of injuries, including drowning, falls, fires, and poisoning. Home and recreation-related injuries affect people of all ages, from infants to older adults. The DEHS works to ensure that all people have safe and healthy homes and places to play.
- The DEHS provides assessment and education about road safety, child passenger safety seat installation, safe walking routes, and use of helmets by children and adults who ride bicycles and motorcycles/ATVs.

**INJURY SURVEILLANCE AND INVESTIGATION**

The DEHS get clinical referrals to provide environmental health and injury prevention consults for older adult patients who are at risk for fall injuries. Environmental investigations of these cases include assessments of environments to identify hazards and make recommendations for corrective actions to improve the environmental conditions.

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, Tribal Epi-Center provides regional unintentional injury surveillance data to inform priorities for interventions. Recent cooperative agreements with the Northwest Washington Indian Health Board and the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board have shown how successful injury interventions can be delivered when leveraging resources and partnerships.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, AND STUDY

The DEHS advises and consults on program planning and policy development related to injury prevention. The goals are to enhance stakeholder awareness of the extent of the injury problem, develop the capacity of Tribes and Tribal programs to design injury initiatives to meet their needs, and to deliver evidence-based best practices to prevent injuries and positively impact community health. Activities and projects include:

- Ensure tribes have and enforce current, relevant traffic safety and housing safety codes. Such codes, when followed and enforced, are proven to prevent hazards and unintentional injuries due to risky driving behaviors, improper use of motor vehicle restraints and child passenger safety seats, and lack of housing modifications that prevent slips, trips, and falls.
- The DEHS provides health and safety training and educational materials on a variety of topics to homeowners and Tribal Housing Authority staff, law enforcement professionals and public health officials. Training occurs at the local level and through the IHS Environmental Health Support Center training course offerings.
- Participate in professional associations in order to network with other agencies throughout the state(s).
- The most effective interventions to prevent and control environmentally-related injuries are community-based projects. The DEHS works with Tribes and Tribal programs to support project development and applications for funding.