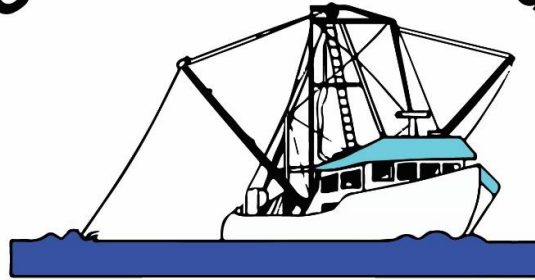


**U.S. Coast Guard**



**Fishing Vessel Safety**

**Federal  
Requirements  
for  
Commercial  
Fishing Industry  
Vessels**

This pamphlet is published by the U. S. Coast Guard:  
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Regulatory information current through **June 1, 2020**

## **Federal Requirements for Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels**

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This pamphlet contains information on Federal requirements for commercial fishing industry vessels. Owners/operators may be required to comply with additional regulations specific to the state in which the vessel is registered or operated. Contact your local authorities to ensure compliance with state laws.

Requirements in this pamphlet include cites from applicable laws and regulations. This pamphlet summarizes the regulations as applicable to most vessels. It is not intended to be all-inclusive. Additional details on specific requirements can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), available at: [www.eCFR.gov](http://www.eCFR.gov), your local library, bookstore or may be ordered from the Government Bookstore 1-866-512-1800, <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/sales>.

## Dockside Safety Exams

**Required Dockside Safety Examinations:** 46 U.S.C. §4502(f) requires commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 3 nautical miles from the baseline from which the territorial sea of the United States is measured or beyond 3 nautical miles from the coastline of the Great Lakes, be examined dockside at least once every 5 years. The Coast Guard advises that a safety exam should be completed every 2 years to ensure safety equipment and procedures are current. The dockside exam compliance decals are valid for 2 years.

Fish Processing, Aleutian Trade Act Vessels or vessels that carry a NOAA Fisheries Observer must be examined dockside at least once every 2 years.

**Voluntary Dockside Safety Examinations:** Voluntary dockside safety examinations are encouraged for all other commercial fishing vessels. These free examinations include a thorough check of safety equipment required on that particular vessel. The examination will be conducted by qualified Coast Guard personnel or a third party organization accepted by the Coast Guard.

The dockside examination educates the fishing public. There is no penalty for not passing a voluntary exam, a work list will be provided to the owner/operator identifying items that need to be corrected. Upon successful completion a safety decal is issued to the vessel that indicates compliance with the regulations.

**Contact your local Examiner** to schedule a dockside examination. For a complete list of Examiners visit <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/FishSafe>. You may also request an examination by contacting your Coast Guard District Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinator listed at the back of this pamphlet.



Safety Exam Decal

## At-Sea Boardings



**At-sea boardings** The Coast Guard is the primary law enforcement presence at sea. Coast Guard Boarding Teams conduct law enforcement boardings to verify compliance with various laws regarding fisheries, safety and environmental protection. Compliance with safety regulations reduces the chance of vessel casualties and helps avoid costly citations. Additionally, the presence of a valid examination decal may reduce time spent checking safety equipment during an at-sea boarding.

### **Voyage terminations for unsafe operations**

If the boarding officer determines that an especially hazardous condition exists, the vessel's voyage could be terminated. The regulations identify eleven items that may be grounds for voyage termination (46 CFR Part 28.65):

1. Insufficient or unserviceable survival gear (such as PFDs, immersion suits, survival craft, etc.)
2. No operable EPIRB or radio (when required)
3. Inadequate fire fighting equipment
4. Excessive volatile fuel/vapors in bilges
5. Instability resulting from overloading, improper loading, or lack of freeboard
6. Inoperable bilge system (when required)
7. Intoxication of operator (.04% BAC)
8. Lack of adequate operable navigations lights during periods of reduced visibility
9. Watertight closures missing or inoperable (when required)
10. Flooding or uncontrolled leakage in any space
11. A missing or expired Certificate of Class for a Fish Processing Vessel (when required)

## Requirements for all Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels

### Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and Immersion Suits

- 46 CFR 28.105 – General Requirements
- 46 CFR 28.110 – Number and Stowage
- 46 CFR 28.135 – Markings
- 46 CFR 28.140 – Maintenance
- 46 CFR 25.25 – Life Preservers and Other Lifesaving Equipment

There must be at least one Coast Guard approved device of the proper size for each person on board the vessel (see table).

Type of PFD Required		
Area of Operation	Vessel Type	Device
Seaward of the Boundary Line, north of 32°N, or south of 32°S, and Lake Superior	Documented	Immersion Suit
Coastal Waters on the West Coast of the U.S. north of Pt. Reyes, CA; Beyond coastal waters, cold waters; and Lake Superior	All	Immersion Suit
All other waters (includes Great Lakes except Lake Superior)	40 feet or more in length	Type I, Type V Hybrid, or Immersion Suit
All other waters (includes Great Lakes except Lake Superior)	Less than 40 feet in length	Type I, II, III, Type V Hybrid, or Immersion Suit

Requirements	
Stowage and Condition	Readily accessible and in good (serviceable) condition
Markings	Must be marked with the name of: - the vessel <b>or</b> - the owner of the device <b>or</b> - the assigned individual
Retro-reflective material	62 square inches (31 sq. in. on front and 31 sq. in. on back)
Approved Personal Marker Light	Vessels on Coastwise, Ocean or voyages on the Great Lakes. Attached to front shoulder of PFD

**EXAMPLES OF PFDs and IMMERSION SUITS**

<b>TYPE I</b>	
<b>TYPE II</b>	
<b>TYPE III</b>	
<b>TYPE V</b>	
<b>IMMERSION SUIT</b>	<p>(aka Exposure Suit or Survival Suit)</p> 

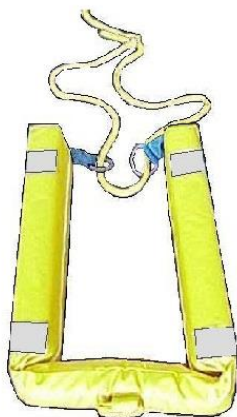
### Throwable Flotation Devices

46 CFR 28.115 – General Requirements  
46 CFR 28.135 – Markings

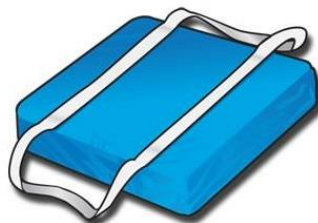
A Coast Guard approved throwable flotation device (ring life buoy or buoyant cushion) must be carried on board, as specified in the following:

Vessel Length	Device Required
Less than 16 feet	None
16 feet to less than 26 feet	1 USCG approved throwable cushion or ring life buoy
26 feet to less than 65 feet	1 orange 24-inch ring life buoy with 60 feet of line attached
65 feet or more	3 orange 24-inch ring life buoys, at least one device must have 90 feet of line attached

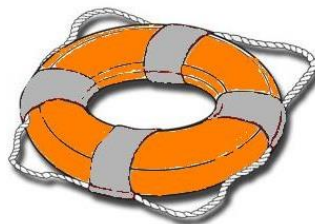
A commercial Lifesling<sup>3</sup>™ (CG Approval 160.050), may be substituted for a ring life buoy, if the vessel has a lifting point 10 ft. above the deck, device is stowed as per the instructions and the crew is trained in its proper use.



LifeSling



Throwable Cushion



Ring Life Buoy



## Survival Craft

- 46 CFR 28.120 – General Requirements
- 46 CFR 28.125 – Stowage
- 46 CFR 28.130 – Equipment
- 46 CFR 28.135 – Markings
- 46 CFR 28.140 – Maintenance

Commercial fishing industry vessels are required to carry Coast Guard approved survival craft of sufficient capacity to accommodate the total number of individuals on board as determined by the tables.

### Warm Waters

#### State Numbered Vessels

Area	Vessel Length	Survival Craft
Inside Boundary Line; or lakes, bays, sounds, rivers	All	None
Beyond Boundary Line, within 20 miles of coastline	All	Life Float <sup>1,2</sup>
Beyond 20 miles of the coastline	All	Inflatable buoyant apparatus

#### Documented Vessels

Inside Boundary Line; or lakes, bays, sounds, rivers	All	None
Beyond Boundary Line, within 20 miles of coastline	All	Life Float <sup>1,2</sup>
20 – 50 miles of the coastline	All	Inflatable Liferaft with Coastal Pack
Beyond 50 miles from coastline	All	Inflatable liferaft with SOLAS A pack.

### Cold Waters

#### State Numbered Vessels

Area	Vessel Length	Survival Craft
0-12 miles from coastline	Less than 36 feet	Buoyant apparatus <sup>1</sup>
0-12 miles from coastline	36 feet or more	Buoyant apparatus
Beyond 12 miles from coastline	All	Inflatable buoyant apparatus

#### Documented Vessels

0-12 miles from coastline	Less than 36 feet	Buoyant apparatus <sup>1</sup>
0-12 miles from coastline	36 feet or more	Inflatable buoyant apparatus <sup>2</sup>
12 - 20 miles from coastline	All	Liferaft
20-50 miles from coastline	All	Liferaft with SOLAS B pack.
Beyond 50 miles from coastline	All	Liferaft with SOLAS A pack.

Great Lakes		
State Numbered Vessels		
Area	Vessel Length	Survival Craft
Warm Waters, within 3 miles of coastline	All	None
Warm Waters, Beyond 3 miles of coastline	All	Buoyant Apparatus <sup>1</sup>
Cold Waters	36 feet or more	Buoyant Apparatus
Documented Vessels		
Warm Waters within 3 miles of coastline	All	None
Warm Waters, beyond 3 miles of coastline	All	Buoyant Apparatus <sup>1</sup>
Cold Waters	Less than 36 feet	Buoyant Apparatus <sup>1</sup>
Cold Waters	36 feet or more	Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A vessel less than 36 feet which operates within 12 miles of the coastline with three or fewer people on board is not required to carry a survival craft.

<sup>2</sup> A Coast Guard approved Buoyant Apparatus may be substituted provided the vessel operates within 12 miles of the coastline with three or fewer people on board.

**Hierarchy:** A survival craft higher in the hierarchy may be substituted for any survival craft required. The hierarchy of survival craft in descending order is:

1. Lifeboat
2. Liferaft with SOLAS A Pack or Oceans pack
3. Liferaft with SOLAS B Pack or Limited pack
4. Liferaft with Coastal Service Pack
5. Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus (IBA)
6. Life Float
7. Buoyant Apparatus

**Exceptions**

An auxiliary craft, which is **integral to and necessary for** normal fishing operations, may be substituted for a survival craft (except for an inflatable liferaft) if it is readily accessible during an emergency and is capable of safely holding all persons on board. (Loading may not exceed the rated capacity of the craft.)

Vessels less than 36 ft. which meet flotation provisions of 33 CFR Part 183 and operate within 12 miles of the coastline are not required to carry a survival craft.

Undocumented vessels with more than 16 individuals on board refer to table 46 CFR 28.120(c)

### Survival Craft Examples



Inflatable Liferaft



Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus



Life Float



Bouyant Apparatus

### Stowage of Survival Craft

46 CFR 28.125

Inflatable Liferafts that are required to be equipped with a SOLAS A or B equipment pack must be stowed so as to float free and automatically inflate in the event the vessel sinks.

All Inflatable Liferafts, Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus, and any auxiliary craft used in their place must be readily accessible for launching or be stowed to float free if the vessel sinks.

A hydrostatic release unit used in a float free arrangement must have a Coast Guard approval number starting with 160.062. A float free link may be used with a Buoyant Apparatus or a Life Float and must be certified to meet 46 CFR, subpart 160.073.



### Life Float & Buoyant Apparatus Equipment

46 CFR 28.130

Lifeline, Pendants, Painter, Floating electric water light (Coast Guard approval 161.010)

### Lifesaving Equipment Marking

46 CFR 28.135  
46 CFR 28.130

Marking of Lifesaving Equipment	
Item	Marking
Life Float, Buoyant Apparatus or Auxiliary Craft	Vessel Name Type II retro-reflective material
Container for Inflatable Liferaft	Equipment pack; Coastal Service, SOLAS B, or SOLAS A. Manufacturer & service facility markings
Ring Life Buoy	Vessel Name Type II retro-reflective material
EPIRB	Vessel Name Type II retro-reflective material

Type II Retro-reflective material used on continuously exposed rigid surfaces. Must have a Coast Guard approval starting with 164.018.

## Maintenance and Inspection of Lifesaving Equipment

46 CFR 28.140

The vessel's master must ensure that all lifesaving equipment is in good working order, ready for immediate use, and readily accessible before the vessel leaves port and when operating.

Inspection, Maintenance & Servicing	
Item	Procedure and Interval
Inflatable wearable PFD (Type V hybrid)	Service annually according to manufacturer's guidelines
Immersion Suits	Inspect and clean as necessary Service in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines
Other PFDs	Master or knowledgeable individual; Inspect, clean, and repair as necessary
Buoyant Apparatus and Life Floats	Master or knowledgeable individual; Inspect, Clean, and Repair as Necessary
Inflatable Liferafts and Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus	Service Annually at a facility approved by the Coast Guard <i>A new device has two years from date of first packing before having to be serviced; annually thereafter.</i>
Hydrostatic Release (Disposable)	Replace on or before expiration date
Hydrostatic Release (Mechanical)	Service Annually at a facility approved by the Coast Guard
EPIRB	Master or knowledgeable individual; Test monthly
Other dated items	Replace on or before expiration
Batteries	<b>Dated:</b> Replace on or before expiration date <b>Undated:</b> Replace Annually <b>Water-activated:</b> Replace On or Before Expiration Date, Whenever Used, or Exposed to Water

## Escape Routes

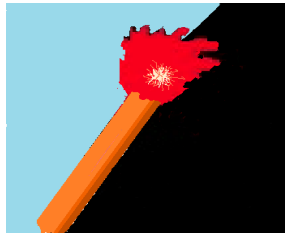
46 CFR 25.26-50

An escape route from a space where an individual may be employed or an accommodation space must not be obstructed.

## Distress Signals

46 CFR 28.145

Area	Devices Required
Oceans, over 50 miles from the coastline	3 parachute flares (160.136) 6 hand flares (160.121) 3 smoke signals (160.122)
Oceans, 3-50 miles from the coastline; or more than 3 miles from the coastline on the Great Lakes	3 parachute flares (160.136 or 160.036) 6 hand flares (160.121 or 160.021) 3 smoke signals (160.122, 160.022 or 160.037)
Coastal waters, excluding Great Lakes; or within 3 miles of the coastline on the Great Lakes	<b>Night:</b> one S.O.S. electric light (161.013) <b>and</b> <b>Day:</b> one flag (160.072) or 3 approved smoke signals, <b>or</b> 3 approved flares for both day and night



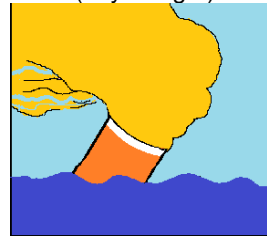
Red Hand Flare  
(day & night)



Parachute Flare  
(day & night)



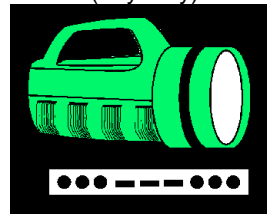
Orange Smoke Signal  
(hand-held/day only)



Floating Orange Smoke  
(day only)



Orange Flag  
(day only)



Electric Distress Signal  
(night only)

### Sound producing Devices

33 CFR 81

If less than 12 meters (39.3 ft.) in overall length must have an efficient sound signal. See the [Inland and International Rules](#) for the requirements to carry a bell and whistle.

### Radiotelephones

33 CFR 26

All power-driven vessels 20 meters (65 feet) or more must comply with radiotelephone requirements.

Vessels of more than 300 gross tons have certain additional radiotelephone requirements.

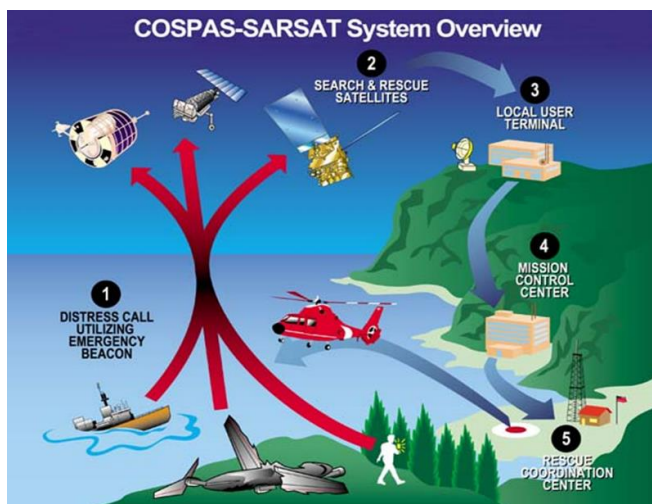
### FCC Ship Radio Station License

47 CFR 80

A current license must be onboard any vessel: (1) required by any regulation to carry radio-communicating equipment (not including EPIRBs); (2) carrying single side band, or (3) which communicates with a foreign coast station.

### Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)

#### System Overview



### EPIRB Requirement

46 CFR 28.150  
46 CFR 25.26

Fishing vessels operating on the high seas (beyond the 3-mile territorial sea line) are required to carry a 406 MHz EPIRB, Category I (float-free, automatically activated) or Category II (manually activated), as follows:

Vessel Length	EPIRB Required
36 feet or more in length	406MHz Category I
36 feet or more in length with flotation *	406MHz Category I <b>or</b> 406MHz Category II
Less than 36 feet in length	406MHz Category II

\* To qualify, a Builder's Certification is required stating vessel is constructed with sufficient inherently buoyant material to keep the flooded vessel afloat.

The EPIRB must be tested when it is installed and at least once every month. The master is responsible for ensuring that the EPIRB is tested as required.

Note: Personal Locator Beacons do not satisfy the requirement to carry an EPIRB on board.

### EPIRB Registration

47 CFR 80.1061(f)

EPIRB must be registered/updated in the COSPAS-SARSAT System. There is no fee for registration. Register on-line [www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov)





## **Fire Extinguishing Equipment**

46 CFR 25.30 – Fire Extinguishing Equipment  
46 CFR 28.155 – Excess Equipment  
46 CFR 28.160 – Portable Fire Extinguishers  
NFPA 10 – Standard for portable fire extinguishers

### **Fishing Vessels Under 65 Feet in Length**

<b>Vessel Length</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Less than 26 feet	1 UL Rated 5-B	1
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	2 UL Rated 5-Bs	2, 3
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	3 UL Rated 5-Bs	2, 3

Note 1: Outboard boats less than 26 feet in length are not required to carry fire extinguishers if their construction will not permit the entrapment of explosive gases or vapors.



Note 2: One UL Rated 20-B (or larger) may be substituted for two UL Rated 5-Bs.

Note 3: Vessels with a CG Approved Fixed Fire Extinguishing System in their engine room may reduce their required number of portable fire extinguishers by one.

No part of a report of a marine casualty investigation shall be admissible as evidence in any civil or administrative proceeding, other than an administrative proceeding initiated by the United States. 46 U.S.C. §6308.

**Fishing Vessels 65 ft. More in Length**

<b>Space</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Quantity/Location</b>
Pilothouse	20-B:C	2 in the vicinity of the exit
Safety Areas, Communicating Corridors	2-A	1 in each main corridor not more than 150 ft. apart (May be located in stairways)
Service Spaces, Galleys	40-B:C	1 for each 2,500 sq. or fraction thereof. Suitable for hazards involved.
Paint Lockers	40-B	1 outside space in the vicinity of the exit
Accessible Baggage & Storage Rooms	2-A	1 for each 2,500 sq. or fraction thereof located in the vicinity of the exits, either inside or outside the spaces
Workshops & Similar Spaces	2-A	1 outside the space in the vicinity of the exit
Machinery Spaces; Internal Combustion Propelling Machinery	40-B:C	1 for each 1,000 brake horsepower or fraction thereof but not fewer than 2 or more than 6
Electric Propulsion Motors Or Generator Unit of Open Type	40-B:C	1 for each propulsion motor generator unit
Auxiliary Spaces	40-B:C	1 outside the space in the vicinity of the exit
Internal Combustion Machinery Spaces	40-B:C	1 outside the space in the vicinity of the exit
Electric Emergency Motors Or Generators	40-B:C	1 outside the space in the vicinity of the exit

<b>Fire Extinguisher Maintenance</b>	
<b>Disposable Extinguishers:</b>	<b>Rechargeable/Refillable Extinguishers:</b>
	
<p>Typically white aluminum canisters with plastic handles. Annual Maintenance may be performed by vessel owner, operator, person-in-charge or a designated member of the crew. Must be replaced when 12 years old. Date on tag must be within the last 12 months.</p>	<p>Red or yellow steel canisters with metal handles. Annual maintenance performed by a certified/licensed technician. Dry Chemical and Halogenated Agent extinguishers must undergo an internal visual examination and agent replacement every 6 years and a hydrostatic test every 12 years. Portable CO2 extinguishers must undergo a hydrostatic test every 5 years. Date on tag must be within the last 12 months.</p>

### **Gasoline Engine Fire Prevention**

46 CFR 25

Gasoline engines except outboard motors, are required to have backfire flame control. Certain spaces are required to have a means for removal of flammable gases.

## **Rules of the Road**

33 CFR 83.01(g)  
NVIC 1-16, CH-1

Vessels 12 meters (39.4 feet) or more in overall length that operate shoreward of the COLREGS Demarcation Lines must have a copy of the Inland Navigation Rules on board. In some areas, like Alaska, there are no waters shoreward of the Demarcation Line and this does not apply. A ready reference (hard copy) must be on board.

## **Navigation Lights**

33 CFR 81

Vessels must comply with specific light, shape, and sound signal requirements. Refer to the [Rules of the Road](#) as requirements vary depending on vessel's size, service and the type of activity it is engaged in.

## **Officers' Competency Certificates Convention 1936**

46 USC 8301  
46 CFR 15

Masters, Mates, and Engineers on vessels of 200 gross tons or more that operate beyond the Boundary Line must have the appropriate Coast Guard license.

## **Vessel Instability**

46 CFR 28.65(b)(5)

A vessel must not have instability from overloading, improper loading or lack of freeboard. A vessel's voyage may be terminated for instability.

## **Operation of a Vessel Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs is Prohibited**

33 CFR Part 95

An individual is under the influence of alcohol or a dangerous drug when the individual operating a vessel has an alcohol concentration of .04 percent by weight or more in their blood; or,

The individual is operating any vessel and the effect of the intoxicant(s) consumed by the individual on the person's manner, disposition, speech, muscular movement, general appearance or behavior is apparent by observation.

Report violators to the Coast Guard Command Center 1-855-406-8724.

## Casualties and Injuries

- 46 CFR 4.05-1 – Notice of Marine Casualty
- 46 CFR 4.05-10 – Written Report of Marine Casualty
- 46 CFR 28.80 – Report of Casualty
- 46 CFR 28.90 – Report of Injury

### Marine Casualties

If any of the following incidents occur, immediately after the addressing safety concerns, the owner, agent, master, operator, or person in charge, shall notify the nearest Sector Office, Marine Inspection Office or Coast Guard Group Office:

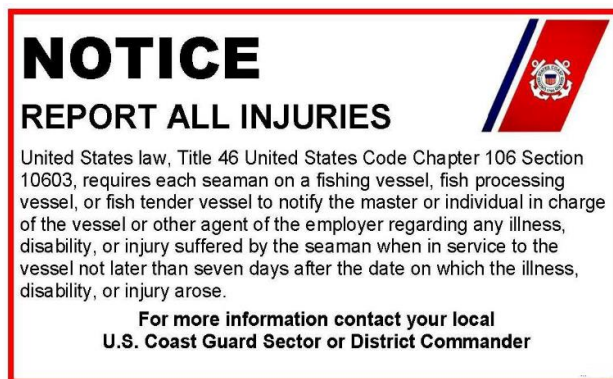
- grounding, or allision with a bridge;
- loss of main propulsion or primary steering;
- loss of life;
- injury that requires professional medical treatment, beyond first aid, and that renders the individual unfit to perform duties on board the vessel;
- any property damage over \$75,000; or
- any occurrence which affects vessel seaworthiness (such as fire, flooding, or failure of fixed fire extinguishing systems, lifesaving equipment, auxiliary power, or bilge systems).
- any occurrence involving significant harm to the environment

### Injury Placard

46 CFR 28.165 – Injury Placard

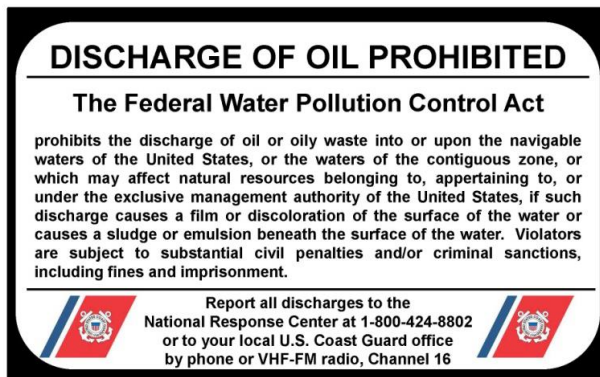
**Applies to:** All commercial vessels

<b>Requirements:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must be at least 5" X 7"</li><li>• Must be posted in a highly visible location, accessible to the crew.</li></ul>



## Oil Pollution Placard

33 CFR 155.450

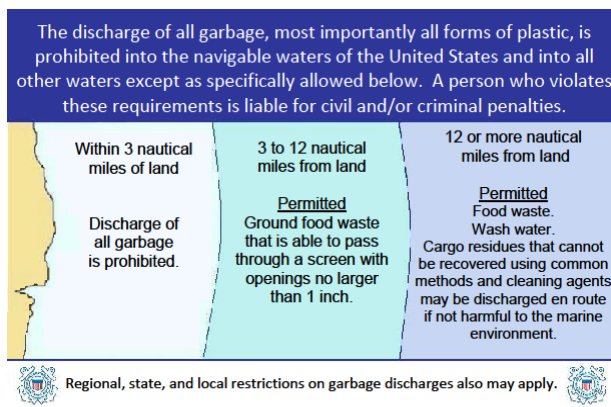


Vessels 26 feet or more in overall length must post an oil pollution placard

- Placard must be at least 5" X 8"
- In a language understood by the crew
- Permanently affixed in the machinery space or near the bilge pump operating switch

## Garbage Placard

33 CFR 151.59



Vessels 26 feet or more in overall length must post a garbage placard

- Displayed in prominent locations
- At least 4" X 9" in size
- Letters must be at least 1/8 inch high
- Must be made of durable material

## **Waste Management Plan**

33 CFR 151.57

Vessels 40 feet or more in overall length, which operate on an ocean voyage (beyond the territorial sea), must have a written solid waste management plan which describes procedures for collecting, processing, storing, and discharging garbage and designates a person in charge of carrying out the plan.

Vessels 400 gross tons and over must also maintain a garbage log.

## **Marine Sanitation Device**

33 CFR Part 159.7

All vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable Coast Guard certified Marine Sanitation Device (MSD) or a holding tank. If a "y" valve is installed with a holding tank, it must be secured to direct the flow into the holding tank while the vessel operates on U.S. navigable waters.

## **Vessel Registration**

**State Numbering** - 33 CFR 173

Except for certain exempted vessels, self-propelled vessels of less than 5 net tons must be registered/ numbered with the state where the vessel operates.

**USCG Documentation** - 46 CFR 67-69

Commercial fishing vessels measuring 5 net tons and greater must be documented with the Coast Guard, display name, hailing port and official number

## **Drug Testing Requirements**

46 CFR Parts 4 & 16

Any vessel required to carry Coast Guard licensed or documented crew must comply with the random, pre-employment, and periodic marine employment testing requirements.

If a "serious marine incident" (see definition 46 CFR 4.03-2) occurs, every person directly involved must be tested for evidence of alcohol (within 2 hours) and dangerous drugs (within 32 hours) regardless of whether they are licensed or documented crew. An alcohol test kit for each person must be carried on board if more than 2 hours from accessible testing equipment. Most commercial fishing vessels will need to carry a DOT-approved alcohol testing device onboard.

## **Additional requirements for Documented Vessels that operate beyond the Boundary Line OR with more than 16 people on board**

### **Navigation Information**

46 CFR 28.225  
NVIC 1-16

Vessels are required to carry navigational information that covers the area in which they will operate or the area to be transited as follows:

- Currently corrected charts of appropriate scale for safe navigation; and
- Currently corrected copy, or applicable extract, of:
  - \_U.S. Coast Pilot
  - \_Coast Guard Light List
  - \_Tide Tables
  - \_Tidal Current Tables
- *Carriage of electronic versions of navigation publications are allowed.*
- *Electronic charts are **not** allowed unless viewed on an Electronic Chart System (ECS) or a Class A Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS). The ECS system **must** have a Certificate of Conformity certifying compliance with the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTMC).*

### **Electronic Position Fixing Devices**

46 CFR 28.260

Vessels 79 feet or more in length must be equipped with an electronic position fixing device (such as a Global Positioning System) capable of providing accurate fixes for the area in which the vessel operates.

### **Compass**

46 CFR 28.230

Vessels must be equipped with an operable magnetic steering compass with a compass deviation table at the operating station.



## Communication Equipment

46 CFR 28.245, 28.375  
33 CFR 26.03  
47 CFR 80



U.S. Documented Vessels must be equipped as follows:

Operating Area	Radio type	
	VHF 156-162 MHz	SSB (HF) 2-27.5 MHz
All	X	
More than 20nm from coast	X	X
Waters next to Alaska	X	X

A vessel operating in waters contiguous to Alaska where no public coast station or U.S. Coast Guard station is within range of the 156-162 MHz, must be equipped with a radiotelephone transceiver operating within the 2-27.5 MHz band.

A single radio transceiver which meets the above requirements is acceptable to meet the above requirements

A **cellular telephone or satellite communication** system servicing the area in which the vessel operates may substitute for the SSB but is not acceptable to meet the VHF carriage requirement.

The principle operating position of communication equipment must be at the vessel's operating station. The equipment must be installed to ensure safe operation, to facilitate repair, and to protect it from physical damage and heavy weather.

All communication equipment must be provided with an emergency source of power, located separate from the machinery space, capable of powering the equipment continuously for at least 3 hours.

**Note:** Communication equipment must comply with the technical standards and operating requirements issued by the FCC. When using radio communication equipment, each vessel must have a Ship Radio Station License issued by the FCC, as set forth in 47 CFR part 80.

## Digital Selective Calling (DSC)

www.navcen.uscg.gov



**DSC Radio Distress Button**

Modern Marine Radios are equipped with DSC. DSC allows mariners to instantly send a distress alert by pressing the “DISTRESS” button. DSC radios must have the Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) entered into the radio. This is a unique identifier assigned to the vessel and is located on the vessel's FCC Ship/Station license. DSC radios also need to be interconnected with the GPS or have internal GPS to properly operate.

The Coast Guard urges, in the strongest terms possible, that you take the time to interconnect your GPS and DSC-equipped radio. Doing so may save your life in a distress situation! Before interconnecting your radio & GPS consult the owner's manual. DSC is required on vessels 300 gross tons and over (Alaska is excluded).

## Automatic Identification System (AIS)

33 CFR 164.46

All Fishing Industry Vessels 65 feet and longer, must have a proper, Coast Guard Type-Approved, Class A or B AIS when operating upon the navigable waters of the U.S.

## High Water Alarms

46 CFR 28.250

Vessel 36 feet or more in length must be equipped with high water level alarms—both visual and audible—at the operating station. The alarms must indicate high water levels in each of the following normally unmanned spaces:

- A space with a through-hull fitting below the deepest load waterline, such as the lazarette;
- Machinery space bilge, bilge well, shaft alley bilge, or other space subject to flooding from sea water piping within the space; and
- A space with a non-watertight closure, such as a non-watertight hatch on the main deck.

## General Alarm System

46 CFR 28.240

A general alarm system is required when any accommodation space or work space is not adjacent to the operating station. The system must have a contact-maker at the operating station and must be capable of notifying an individual in any accommodation space or work space where they may normally be employed. In noisy work spaces, a flashing red light must also be installed.

Each general alarm bell and flashing red light must be identified with red lettering at least 1/2 inch high as follows:

**ATTENTION  
GENERAL ALARM – WHEN ALARM  
SOUNDS GO TO YOUR STATION.**

The general alarm system must be tested prior to getting underway and at least once each week while underway.

A public address system may be used instead of a general alarm system if it complies with the above and can be activated from the operating station.

## Emergency Instructions

46 CFR 28.265

Emergency instructions must be posted in conspicuous locations accessible to the crew.

On vessels operating with less than 4 individuals on board, the emergency instructions may be kept readily available as an alternative to posting.

The emergency instructions **must identify at least** the following information, as appropriate for the vessel:

- Survival craft embarkation stations and the survival craft to which each person is assigned.
- The fire and emergency signal and the abandon ship signal.
- If immersion suits are provided, the location of the suits and illustrated instructions on the method for donning the suits.
- Procedures for making a distress call.
- Essential action to be taken in an emergency by each individual (station bill)
- *Procedures for rough weather at sea, crossing hazardous bars, and flooding.*

### **Emergency Instructions Continued**

- *Procedures for anchoring the vessel.*
- *Procedures to be used in the event an individual falls overboard.*
- *Procedures for fighting a fire.*

Items (*in italics*) may be kept readily available as an alternative to posting.

### **Drills and Instruction**

46 CFR 28.270

The master or individual in charge of each vessel must ensure that drills are conducted and instructions given to each individual on board at least **once each month** so as to ensure that each individual is familiar with their duties and responses to at least the following contingencies:

- Abandoning the vessel.
- Fighting a fire in different locations on board the vessel.
- Recovering an individual from the water.
- Minimizing the effects of unintentional flooding.
- Launching survival craft and recovering lifeboats.
- Donning immersion suits and other wearable PFDs.
- Donning a fireman's outfit and a self-contained breathing apparatus, if vessel is so equipped.
- Making a voice radio distress call and using visual distress signals.
- Activating the general alarm.
- Reporting inoperative alarm and fire detection systems.

**Drills must be conducted on board the vessel as if there were an actual emergency and must include participation by all persons on board.**

#### **Drill Instructor:**

No individual may conduct drills or provide instructions unless that individual has been trained in the proper procedures for conducting the activity.

The individual conducting the drills and instruction need not be the master, individual in charge of the vessel, or a member of the crew.

Viewing videotapes, followed by a discussion led by a person familiar with the contingencies will satisfy the instruction requirement, but not the hands-on drills.

## **Safety Orientation**

46 CFR 28.270

Prior to operating the vessel, the master must ensure a safety orientation is provided to anyone who has not received the required instruction or participated in the drills. This safety orientation must explain the emergency instructions required by 46 CFR 28.265 and cover the contingencies listed above.

## **First Aid Equipment and Training**

46 CFR 28.210



Each vessel must carry a complete first aid manual and a medicine chest of a size suitable for the number of people on board. The items must be kept in a readily accessible location.

A vessel with more than two people on board must have at least one person certified in first aid and one person certified in CPR as outlined below (a person certified in both first aid and CPR may be counted for both requirements):

Persons Aboard	Training Required	
	First Aid	CPR
More than 2	1	1
More than 16	2	2
More than 49	4	4

## **Firemen's Outfits and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)**

46 CFR 28.205

Any vessel equipped with refrigeration units using ammonia must be equipped with at least two SCBAs.

SCBAs must:

- be approved by MSHA and NIOSH
- be maintained per manufacturer's instructions
- have a minimum 30-minute air supply
- have a full face piece
- have at least one spare air bottle

Vessels with more than 49 people on board must carry at least two fireman's outfits, stowed in widely separated locations.

Each fireman's outfit must consist of:

- an SCBA with lifeline attached
- one flashlight
- a rigid helmet
- boots, gloves, protective clothing
- one fire ax



## **Guards for Exposed Hazards**

46 CFR 28.215

Suitable hand covers, guards, or railing must be installed in way of machinery which could cause injury to personnel, such as gearing, chain or belt drives, and rotating shafting. This is not meant to restrict necessary access to fishing equipment such as winches, drums, or gurdies. Internal combustion engine exhaust pipes within reach of personnel must be insulated or otherwise guarded to prevent burns.

## **Anchors and Radar Reflectors**

46 CFR 28.235

Vessels must be equipped with anchor(s) and chain(s), cable, or rope, appropriate for the vessel and the waters of the intended voyage.

Nonmetallic hull vessels must be equipped with a radar reflector unless the vessel rigging provides a radar signature from a distance of 6 miles.

## **Bilge Systems**

46 CFR 28.255

Vessels must be equipped with a bilge pump and bilge piping capable of draining any watertight compartment, other than tanks and small buoyancy compartments, under all service conditions. Engine rooms must be fitted with more than one suction line.

If a portable bilge pump is used to meet this requirement, a suitable suction hose and discharge hose must be provided. The suction hose must be able to reach the bilges of all watertight compartments it must serve, and the discharge hose must ensure overboard discharge. A portable pump must be capable of dewatering each space at a rate of at least 2-inches of water depth per minute.

Each bilge suction line and dewatering system suction must be fitted with a suitable strainer to prevent clogging of the line.

For larger vessels and those vessels that have fish sorting or processing spaces where water is used, refer to the specific requirements found in 46 CFR 28.255.

### **Safe Boarding Ladder**

50 CFR 600.730

Vessels subject to enforcement of Federal fisheries or any other statute administered by NOAA with **more than 4 feet of freeboard** from the water's surface to the top rail of the gunwale or the threshold of the bulwark cut-out must provide for safe boarding of the boarding team with a Coast Guard approved pilot ladder (46 CFR 163.003). A spreader is required if more than 5 steps.





## Other Applicable Federal Laws and Regulations

### Design & Construction

46 USC 4502-4503  
33 CFR 181  
33 CFR 183

Standards for the design and construction of Commercial Fishing Vessels changed significantly between 2010 and 2018. In general all newly constructed commercial fishing vessels must meet applicable design and construction standards.

Construction of new vessels should be closely coordinated with the shipyard, Naval Architect and the Coast Guard Fishing Vessel Examiner to ensure the vessel being constructed meets requirements of applicable laws.

Vessels less than 50 feet in length shall be constructed in compliance with the recreational boating safety standards in 33 CFR Part 181 and 33 CFR Part 183 as applicable.

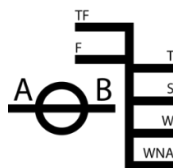
Construction/build requirements for vessels 50 feet or greater in length are outlined in 46 US Code 4502. Application of statutory requirements are subject to vessel built date and length.

### Load Line Requirement

46 USC 5102-5103  
46 USC 4502-4503  
46 CFR 28.895  
46 CFR Subchapter E

Commercial Fishing Vessels 79 feet or greater in load line length are required to incorporate load line standards in the vessel's design and maintain load lines if they were built after July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

Fish Processing and Fish Tender vessels 79 feet or greater required load lines at earlier dates. Contact the District Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinator in your area for further information.



### **Stability Requirements for Vessels 79 ft or More that are not required to be issued a Load Line**

46 CFR Part 28 Subpart E

Each vessel 79 feet or more in length that is not required to be issued a load line, must meet certain stability requirements if:

- its keel was laid or was at a similar stage of construction or had a major conversion started on or after Sept. 15, 1991;
- its fishing or processing equipment was altered for the purpose of catching, landing, or processing fish in a manner different than previously accomplished on the vessel; or
- it was substantially altered on or after Sept. 15, 1991. for specific requirements.

### **Vessels Built or Undergo a Major Conversion completed on or after September 15, 1991, AND operate with More Than 16 Individuals Onboard**

These vessels must meet additional requirements for lifesaving and signaling equipment, fire extinguishing and detection systems, galley hoods, fuel systems, ventilation of enclosed spaces, electrical systems, structural fire protection, means of escape, radar and depth sounding devices, hydraulic equipment, and rails and lifelines. Applicability and specific requirements can be found in 46 CFR Part 28, Subpart D.

### **Fish Processing Vessels**

46 CFR, Part 28, Subpart F

Uninspected fish processing vessels must be examined at least once every two years by the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS), a similarly qualified organization, or a surveyor of an accepted organization. Any fish processing vessel built or converted after July 27, 1990, must be classed by ABS, or a similarly qualified organization.

### **Aleutian Trade Act Vessels**

46 CFR Part 28, Subparts C & G

A vessel engaged in Aleutian Trade may have to comply with additional requirements or undergo periodic inspection based on the vessel size, when it entered service, or if it undergoes a major conversion.

### **Oil Carriage**

33 CFR 155

Certain vessels are prohibited from carrying oil in the forepeak tank or forward of the collision bulkhead.

### **Waste Oil Discharge Piping**

33 CFR 155

Vessels 100 gross tons or more with main or auxiliary machinery spaces must have a fixed piping system for the removal of waste oil. See 33 CFR 155 for specific requirements.

### **Oil Transfer Procedures**

33 CFR 156

There are requirements for oil transfer procedures and piping tests for vessel with a capacity of 250 or more barrels of oil (10,500 gallons).

### **Financial Responsibility**

33 CFR 138

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act applies to all fishing vessels 300 gross tons or more using U.S. ports. A Certificate of Financial Responsibility must be on board.

### **Citizenship**

46 USC 8103

The master, chief engineer, radio officer, or officer in charge of a deck watch or engineering watch on documented vessels must be a U.S. citizen (see USC for exceptions).

### **Fishing Agreement**

46 USC 10601

A written fishing agreement is required with each seaman employed on vessels of 20 gross tons or more.

### **Seamen Rights**

46 USC 10602

Seamen have rights to recover wages and shares of proceeds under 46 USC 10601 Fishing Agreement.

### **Sexual Abuse Act of 1986**

46 USC 10104

If any member of the crew is a victim of a sexual offense, that person should immediately report the incident to the master. It is then the responsibility of the master to report to the Coast Guard any complaints of sexual offenses including aggravated sexual abuse, sexual abuse, sexual abuse of a minor or ward, and sexual contact.

## Definitions

**Boundary Lines** – lines that in general follow the trend of the seaward high water shorelines and cross entrances to small bays, inlets and rivers. Refer to 46 CFR Part 7 for specific descriptions, particularly where they may deviate from above.

**Coastal Waters** –

- U.S. waters of the Great Lakes,
- Territorial Seas of the United States, or
- Waters directly connected to the Great Lakes and territorial seas where any entrance exceeds two nautical miles between opposite shorelines to the first point where the largest distance between shorelines narrows to two miles.

**Cold Water** – waters where the monthly mean low water temperature is normally 59°F/15°C or colder.

**Fishing Vessel:** A vessel that commercially engages in the catching, taking, or harvesting of fish or an activity that can reasonably be expected to result in the catching, taking, or harvesting of fish.

**Fish Processing Vessel** – a vessel that commercially prepares fish or fish products other than by gutting, decapitating, gilling, skinning, shucking, icing, freezing, or brine chilling.

**Fish Tender Vessel** – a vessel that commercially supplies, stores, refrigerates, or transports fish, fish products, or materials directly related to fishing or the preparation of fish to or from a fishing, fish processing, or fish tender vessel or a fish processing facility.

**High Seas** – waters beyond the Territorial Sea (generally beyond three miles of the coast).

**Length** – length listed on a vessel's Certificate of Documentation or Certificate of Number except where otherwise specifically noted.

**Territorial Seas** – Defined in [33 CFR 2.22](#) has two meanings.

\* 12nm wide adjacent to territorial sea baseline for -

- 46 USC Subtitle II
- Ports and waterways safety act.
- Vessel bridge to bridge radiotelephone act
- Criminal jurisdiction pursuant to Title 18 USC
- Special maritime and territorial jurisdiction 18 USC 7
- Interpreting international law

\* 3nm wide adjacent to the territorial sea baseline unless noted above

**Territorial Sea Baseline:** Defined in [33 CFR 2.20](#) is the mean low waterline along the coast of the United States.

**Warm Water** – waters where the monthly mean low water temperature is normally more than 59°F/15°C.

Refer to [46 CFR Part 28.50](#) for more definitions

No part of a report of a marine casualty investigation shall be admissible as evidence in any civil or administrative proceeding, other than an administrative proceeding initiated by the United States. 46 U.S.C. §6308.

## **Notes**

## Ready for Sea Checklist

- Weather: Evaluated weather forecast & bar conditions. Vessel & crew can handle safely! Can monitor weather reports at sea.
- Crew: Trained & drilled in operation of vessel & safety equipment. Work schedule minimizes fatigue.
- Stability: Scuppers & freeing ports clear. Gear, catch & hatches secured. Vessel not overloaded.
- EPIRB & Communications: Equipment tested. EPIRB armed & mounted properly. Back up communications ready to go.
- PFDs/Immersion Suits: Crew has donned to ensure proper fit & good condition. PFDs/Suits accessible & lights attached.
- Survival Craft: Capacity for entire crew. Serviced, properly installed, & crew trained to launch.
- PFDs Worn on Deck: Crew knows to wear PFDs or inflatable suspenders when working on deck.
- Damage Control: Bilge pumps work. Damage control equipment on board & crew trained in use.
- Fire Fighting: Adequate number of serviced fire extinguishers on board & crew trained in firefighting.
- Safety Exam: "Ready for Sea" deck walk/safety inspection & determined vessel safe to sail.

Luck favors  
the prepared



FishSafeWest.info

Fishing Vessel Safety

**USCG Fishing Vessel Safety Program**

<https://www.dco.uscg.mil/FishSafe>

**COAST GUARD DISTRICT COORDINATORS**

District	Location	Phone number
First	Boston, MA	(617) 223-8440 or 8315
Fifth	Portsmouth, VA	(757) 398-7766
Seventh	Miami, FL	(305) 415-6868
Eighth	New Orleans, LA	(504) 671-2154
Ninth	Cleveland, OH	(216) 902-6051
Eleventh	Alameda, CA	(510) 437-5931
Thirteenth	Seattle, WA	(206) 220-7226
Fourteenth	Honolulu, HI	(808) 535-3417
Seventeenth	Juneau, AK	(907) 463-2810 or 2809

