



FISHING VESSEL SAFETY FACT SHEET

SURVIVAL CRAFT REGULATIONS

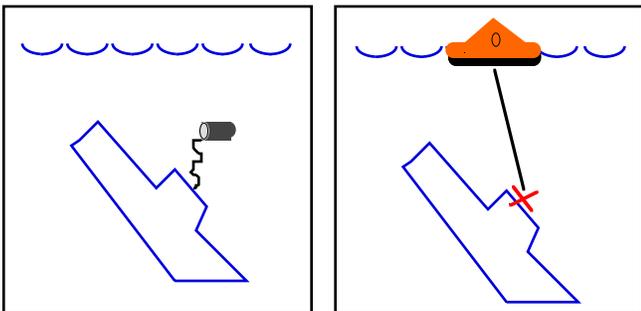
SUBJECT: Stowage of Survival Craft

REGULATION: 46 CFR 28.125(a)

APPLICABILITY: All documented commercial fishing vessels required to carry inflatable liferafts equipped with SOLAS A or B packs, or "ocean service" or "limited service" equivalents are required to stow the raft so that it will float free and automatically inflate in the event the vessel sinks.

PROBLEM: Many commercial fishing vessels utilize hydrostatic release units to satisfy the stowage requirement for inflatable liferafts. Hydrostatic release units are devices that hold a raft in place and release under water pressure.

The most common type of hydrostatic release unit in service in First District waters is a disposable (2 year service life) device that is fitted with an integral weak link. Some vessel operators have been found to have incorrectly installed the hydrostatic release unit in a manner that would prevent the raft from releasing from the vessel in the event of a sinking.



Life raft stowage systems perform two functions. The hydrostatic release unit frees the liferaft from its cradle when the sinking vessel reaches a certain depth. When the raft is freed from its cradle, it remains connected to the vessel by the raft painter via a weak link. The weak link is designed to be strong enough to pull the freighter and inflate the raft, and weak enough to break under the buoyant force of the raft, thus freeing the raft.



This is an improperly installed. By passing the weak link line (the red line) through the lashing hook, the raft would be prevented from releasing in the event of a vessel sinking. *It is essential that the raft not be secured in its cradle by the weak link, since the uninflated raft in its canister does not have the buoyancy to break the weak link.* The weak link should be connected only to the raft painter, and not to the lashings securing the raft to its cradle.

This installation problem is considered a serious deficiency. If detected onboard a vessel the condition should be brought to the immediate attention of the vessel operator and corrected on the spot. If questions remain or the operator is unsure of the proper rigging procedures for the liferaft, refer the vessel to the nearest Marine Safety Office.