



# ***SAFETY ALERT 06-02***

**17th Coast Guard District**  
**United States Coast Guard**  
**P. O. Box 25517**  
**Juneau, Alaska 99802**  
**907-463-2810 or 800-478-7369 In Alaska**  
**[www.uscg.mil/d17/m/CFVS.shtml](http://www.uscg.mil/d17/m/CFVS.shtml)**

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MSO Juneau	463-2450	MSD Kodiak	486-5918
MSD Dutch Harbor	581-3466	MSD Kenai	283-3292

## **CREWMAN WASHED OVERBOARD IN THE BERING SEA**

**Background:** The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of the Coast Guard’s “Ready for Sea” safety program.

**Incident:** The 138 foot catcher/processor vessel had been assisting in the search for two missing crewmembers from a catcher/processor that had caught fire and exploded two days before. It was apparent the Coast Guard would be suspending the search and, with weather building to 30 foot seas and 50 knot winds, the master decided to seek shelter in Dutch Harbor and deliver the two survivors they had rescued. In addition to the survivors, they had picked up a survival craft and secured it on deck. However, as they headed for Dutch Harbor, it broke free and started shifting around on deck. The master sent three crewmen out on deck to secure it again and prevent it from going overboard. While out on deck, a large wave broke across the deck, sweeping one man overboard. A second crewman was also caught by the wave, but he was able to grab hold of the railing. The missing crewman was wearing black raingear and was not wearing any flotation aids. Although they searched for some time, they were unable to find the missing crewman. A Coast Guard helicopter, launched from St. Paul, conducted an aerial search. The search was hindered by snow squalls and half mile visibility, and was unsuccessful in locating the missing individual.

**Lessons Learned:** Although the specific cause of the casualty remains under investigation, there are “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident and several “lessons learned”.

1. Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when working or moving around on deck. Even if you only expect to be on deck for a few minutes, grab a PFD and put it over your rain gear. Or wear an inflatable PFD. If you fall overboard, at least you’ll stay afloat.
2. Sew or glue retroreflective tape to outerwear—rain gear, work jackets, sweat shirts, etc. Light will reflect off the reflective tape providing a more visible target for rescuers.
3. Wear bright colors when you must work on deck. Choose bright, contrasting colors that will easily catch someone’s eye. It could mean the difference in someone spotting you or not amongst the waves.
4. Wear a light on your PFD or clothing – or carry one that can be pinned on in an emergency. Search efforts at night or in inclement weather are very challenging for searchers. Anything that you can do to attract attention to yourself, such as having a bright strobe light on, will aid rescuers in quickly finding you. And in the Bering Sea, every minute matters!
5. Wear a safety harness when the weather is extreme and you must go out on deck. Rig safety lines in exposed areas on deck. It is not uncommon to lose your footing in heavy breaking seas, and the safety line may be the one thing that keeps you from going over the side!
6. Properly secure fishing gear and survival equipment. Thoroughly analyze the risk when weighing the importance of saving material items. Equipment can be replaced - a life cannot.