

CERTIFICATION OF FISHERMEN

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY VESSEL
SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REGARDING THE CERTIFICATION OF
COMPETENCY OF OPERATORS OF DOCUMENTED FISHING INDUSTRY
VESSELS UNDER 200 GROSS TONS

ADOPTED

The United States Coast Guard has recorded the casualty and fatality rates for the commercial fishing industry. The Committee believes these numbers are unacceptably high and has attempted through its work and previous recommendations to offer concrete means of lowering them. Statistics show that many accidents relating to fishing vessels are contributed to or caused by human factors. The prevention of many accidents, casualties, and fatalities can be prevented by the acquisition of certain knowledge, skills and abilities. The Committee feels that a minimum level of competency be established for operators of documented fishing industry vessels under 200 gross tons. Thus, the Committee rejects the status quo where this class of operators is not required to meet any standards.

The Committee feels the best way to attain a desired level of competency is with relevant and practical hands on training and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities.

ADOPTED

Those evidencing proficiency in this way should be issued a "credential". Steps leading to this credential would help insure competency and raise professionalism within the industry. Suspension or revocation of this credential would also provide a means by which appropriate authorities could remove incompetent persons from positions of responsibility on commercial fishing vessels..

ADOPTED

The Committee recommends that the Secretary of Transportation prepare a legislative proposal that establishes a "credential" for the operators of fishing, fish processing, and fish tender vessels. Further this plan should apply to all regions and fisheries of the United States and its territories.

This plan shall apply to "operators" of federally documented commercial fishing vessels less than 200 gross tons. So that the International Tonnage Convention does not interfere with this proposal, existing regulations, or proposed fishing vessel safety regulations, the committee recommends the following in order to maintain the status quo: one, that

manning and watch keeping requirements are not increased by a shift from national to international tonnage, and two, that fishing vessel safety regulations and certification of operators not be avoided by any decrease in tonnage by a shift in the above tonnages. A modification by Congress to amend Public Law 100-424 to specify a length over all or the current tonnage standard on documented fishing vessels would accomplish this end.

ADOPTED

The Committee recommends the USCG be the federal agency to oversee and administer this program because of its established relationship and experience with the marine industry. There is much to be gained by keeping the interactions of the government and the commercial fishing industry consolidated in as few agencies as possible.

ADOPTED

The person in charge of the vessel shall be responsible for overall safety. This person shall be available to advise any watch keeper whenever a question about the safe operation of the vessel arises.

The Committee recommends that the following minimum number of qualified persons be aboard commercial fishing vessels:

Vessel Class	Vessel Size	Qualified Personnel
A	doc. F/V < 79 ft & < 200 GT	Operator
B	doc. F/V > or = 79', < 200 GT, & < 16 POB	Master, Certified Fisherman
C	doc. F/V > or = 79', < 200 GT, > or = 16 POB	Master, Operator, Certified Fisherman

REJECTED

79', 16 PERSONS

These break points in size and personnel were chosen to reflect international standards, language of the CFIVSA of 1988, and in order to facilitate implementation of this proposal.

Class B and C vessels require more qualified personnel. The number of persons on board and the higher level of complexity on these vessels would indicate the need for more responsible and competent persons in charge if the master is off watch.

The Committee recommends that a Certified Fisherman possess basic competency in Rules of the Road and seamanship. The

individual must speak English and meet vision standards including differentiation of colors. The person must also possess a certificate from a USCG approved Personal Survival Course (IMO).

In addition to the above, the Operator shall possess basic competency in navigation. He shall also possess a current CPR and First Aid card. Experience shall include six months of sea time.

A Master, in addition to all the above, shall possess more extensive knowledge of Rules of the Road, navigation (including electronic), and seamanship. Furthermore, he shall possess competency in stability, fire prevention and control, fishing vessel regulations, and weather. Experience shall include two years of sea time.

These requirements reflect a balance between what is required for safety on one hand and yet reduces the burden of implementation on the fishing industry and the Coast Guard. These minimum requirements may be increased if deemed necessary in the future. Equivalencies may exist in the current USCG licensing scheme, i.e., OUPV + Personal Survival Course (IMO) = Operator.

It is hoped and desired that any training proposal will build upon existing programs which have been developed in cooperation with the fishing industry. It is further recommended that the Coast Guard work in close consultation with the industry to develop practical standards for training and evaluations. This should facilitate acceptance of this plan by the industry.

The USCG may authorize third parties to evaluate mariners against a prescribed competency standard and to "certify" applicants found qualified as part of the Coast Guard requirements. The committee strongly supports the concept of third party training. For example, the committee is investigating the appropriateness of utilizing the Maritime Administration in training.

The Committee hopes that those people with a history of experience in the fishing industry prior to implementation of these regulations, who can demonstrate proficiency in any of these subjects, will be grandfathered in for that requirement at an appropriate competency level. However, individuals must still be in possession of a current CPR, First Aid, and Personal Survival Course (IMO) cards.

Credentials should be renewed every five years. This would include a short refresher course in Personal Survival (IMO), to keep individuals abreast of changes in technology.

TO BE DEVELOPED THROUGH RULE MAKING

ADOPTED

ADOPTED

ADDRESS IN RULE MAKING

ADOPTED

The CFIVSAC feels the above recommendations outline a realistic and flexible plan. It attempts to ease the heavy impact on the U.S. commercial fishing industry and on the U.S. Coast Guard, yet still help reduce the current unacceptably high level of fatalities, casualties, and number and severity of personal injuries.

These recommendations were made by general consensus of the membership of the CFIVSAC at a meeting held in Washington, D.C. January 25 and 26, 1990.