

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



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## MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN 04-18

### Evaluate Best Means of Recovering a Person Overboard & Always Wear a PFD

The U.S. Coast Guard issues these bulletins to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions identified as causal factors in marine casualties to help prevent future incidents. This bulletin is meant to educate the public about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or amend existing applicable company policies.

A crewmember onboard a commercial fishing vessel fell overboard during gill netting operations and was unable to be recovered by the owner/operator for an estimated fifteen minutes. By the time assistance was rendered by a nearby vessel, the crewmember had drowned following cold-water exposure.

Two of the major factors leading to this casualty were the failure to have a means of recovering a man overboard and the failure to wear a flotation device.

- It is recommended that all commercial fishing vessels conduct man overboard drills to evaluate the best method to retrieve an incapacitated person from the water. This may include the need for an overboard recovery device.
- It is also recommend to wear a personal flotation device while working on deck should a fall overboard occur. Researchers from the NIOSH Alaska Pacific Office conducted an evaluation with commercial fishermen from 4 gear groups (crabbers, trawlers, longliners, gillnetters) to rate the comfort and acceptability of six modern PFDs. Commercial fishing vessel operators may find the evaluations helpful in promoting PFD wear aboard their vessel(s). The evaluations can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2013-131/default.html>

Questions regarding commercial fishing vessel requirements and best practices should be directed to Sector Anchorage's Commercial Fishing Vessel Coordinator, Mr. Russel Hazlett, at (907)428-4154 or by email at [Russell.C.Hazlett@uscg.mil](mailto:Russell.C.Hazlett@uscg.mil).

Sincerely,

S. C. MACKENZIE  
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard  
Captain of the Port, Western Alaska