



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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Notification of New Requirements for Commercial Fishing Vessels

The purpose of this Bulletin is to remind the commercial fishing industry about safety and equipment requirements established by the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010* and the *Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2012 as well as other applicable laws*. These new requirements are scheduled to go into effect by the date(s) set forth under the law.

Mandatory Dockside Safety Examinations: Both Acts mentioned above directed that both State-registered and Federally-documented vessels that meet the following criteria, receive a safety examination no later than **October 15, 2015**, the date this requirement is scheduled to take effect. The criteria includes: operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the U.S. territorial sea or the coastline of the Great Lakes and operating anywhere with more than 16 individuals on board (either inside 3 miles of the baseline or beyond 3 miles of the baseline). These vessels will need to complete this dockside safety examination **at least once every 5 years**, however, some vessels, depending on their operation or areas of service, may be subject to a more frequent examination schedule.

If you have had your vessel examined recently, the safety decal will remain valid until its expiration and you will be considered in compliance. If you do not have a valid safety decal after **October 15, 2015**, you could be subject to a civil penalty or operational controls that may affect your ability to fish. To help alleviate last minute exam scheduling backlogs, do not wait until the last minute to request an examination.

Survival Craft: The Acts also deleted the words "lifeboats or liferafts," and replaced them with, "**a survival craft that ensures that no part of an individual is immersed in water...**" This means that all commercial fishing industry vessels operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the base line or the coastline of the Great Lakes will be required to carry a survival craft that keeps you out of the water (i.e., a lifeboat, inflatable liferaft, or inflatable buoyant apparatus) in the event of an abandon ship need. Current life floats and buoyant apparatus are not designed to keep an individual out of the water when used in an emergency. This requirement for a survival craft, such as a lifeboat, inflatable liferaft, or inflatable buoyant apparatus that keeps one out of the water, is scheduled to go into effect on **February 16, 2016**.

AIS: Effective March 2, 2016 all commercial vessels including fishing vessels over 65 feet will be required to carry either a Class A or Class B Automatic Identification System (AIS). The AIS is a shipboard broadcast system that acts like a transponder, operating in the VHF maritime band. Picture a shipboard radar or an electronic chart display that includes a symbol for every significant ship within radio range, each as desired with a velocity vector (indicating speed and heading). Each ship "symbol" can reflect the actual size of the ship, with position to GPS or differential GPS accuracy. By "clicking" on a ship symbol, you can learn the ship name, course and speed, classification, call sign, registration number, MMSI, and other information.

Questions regarding these requirements should be forwarded to the First District Office at 617-223-8315 or to your local Sector Vessel Examiner. **The examiners and other information can be found on the web site, www.fishsafe.info.** Click on local examiners on the left side drop down menu.