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Intro Planned for First-Ever RESCUES Manual for Commercial Fishing Industry

GLOUCESTER, MA -- Two organizations serving commercial fishermen in Massachusetts will hold an event in Gloucester this week to introduce a comprehensive guidebook on dealing with a crisis in a fishing community.

The new RESCUES manual will be presented publicly for the first time by the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership and Fishing Partnership Support Services during a press conference at the Gloucester Coast Guard Station, 17 Harbor Loop, on Thursday, March 24, at 2:00 P.M. On-site parking will be available.

RESCUES is an acronym for the title of the manual: **Responding to Emergencies at Sea and to Communities Under Extreme Stress.**

A wealth of information has been consolidated within RESCUES to help prepare individuals, groups and entire communities for a crisis affecting members of the commercial fishing industry, such as the sinking of a boat or the search for crew members lost overboard at sea.

"The idea is that, when a crisis occurs, folks in our fishing ports will be able to consult the manual and know right away how the Coast Guard and other authorities are responding -- and where they can turn for reliable information and support," said J.J. Bartlett, President of Fishing Partnership Support Services.

Also, Bartlett said, the manual describes "how families may access services and resources that exist to help them during these terrible situations and for long afterwards."

Madeleine Hall-Arber, an anthropologist at the Sea Grant College program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Ann Backus, of the Harvard University School of Public Health, served as principal investigators and researchers on the lengthy project that produced RESCUES. The MIT Sea Grant College program also provided financing for the printing of the manual.

"By gathering information and knowledge that had never before been assembled in this fashion, and by tying so many disparate but important elements together, RESCUES will make a unique contribution to the well-being of fishing families and to the cohesiveness of fishing communities," said Ms. Hall-Arber. "It fills a big gap, and it serves a function much needed in an industry experiencing stress on multiple fronts."

In addition to Ms. Hall-Arber, Ms. Backus and Mr. Bartlett, press conference speakers will include:

- Gloucester Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken
- Captain Robert Lepere, commanding officer of the Gloucester Coast Guard Station
- Captain Claudia C. Gelzer, commanding officer of the Boston Coast Guard Station and Captain of the Port of Boston.
- Angela Sanfilippo, President of both the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association and the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, who will also serve as master of ceremonies.
- Gloucester State Rep. Ann Margaret Ferrante of the 5th Essex District

"To me, RESCUES is about peace of mind," said Ms. Sanfilippo. "Many of us who have been involved for years in helping fishermen and their families are in the last years of our working lives and it is good to know that the knowledge and insights we have gained are now gathered in one place for the benefit of future generations."

On a reflective note, she added, "Working on this manual brought back painful memories of when a fisherman or an entire crew died at sea. That was very hard for us. At the same time, we relived those moments when a fisherman was saved from death because of a smart and courageous rescue. We were heartened by the realization that more lives were saved in the past 40 years than were lost."

Copies of RESCUES will be provided at the March 24 event and all speakers will be available to answer questions from the media.

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