

## **WORKSHOP CHARGE**

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One of the hazards of following three excellent speakers is that they will have said everything I intended to say, and that's largely the case.

Giving the Workshop Charge is probably a little presumptuous in this setting, because I really don't think there's any question at all that anyone in this room would need any external motivation to try to do what they could about fishing safety. I think I know probably two-thirds of the people in the room, and I know that you're all very committed to doing that. However, I do want to reiterate some of the things that the previous speakers have said, and maybe provide a slightly different perspective about the opportunity that the next couple of days afford us.

There's a balance here that we have to strike. The Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988 (CFIVSA), as landmark legislation, has led to impressive results in what I would call the salvage of fishermen. Today, in spite of the persistence of horrific events, we have much higher survivorship among fishermen. That's largely due to the availability of the EPIRBs, survival suits, and life rafts on all the cold-water vessels now. Also largely due to, and dependent upon, the efforts by many of the search and rescue (SAR) personnel of the Coast Guard. On the other hand, we haven't made much progress in another major area: there is still an average of 35 vessels a year going over or sinking in Alaskan seas, virtually all of them in one way or another unstable, or at least unsuitable for the circumstances in which they find themselves. As a result, there's an average of over 100 Alaskan fishermen ending up in the icy seas every year. Their salvage is largely dependent upon efforts by USCG SAR personnel, often under extreme conditions.

So I'm actually concerned about two workforces. I was very concerned a few years ago about one work force, the fishermen, and now I'm almost as concerned about the SAR personnel who are largely relied upon to affect that salvage.

We will have an opportunity today to hear a wide variety of talks about the current status of commercial fishing safety. This should provide us by the end of the day with a fairly accurate picture of where things stand for this industry: that there's been substantial progress, and the fact that we can make that kind of progress should energize us toward trying to go the rest of the distance.

The other thing that should become clear is that there are still some large gaps, and we're not doing a very good job yet of actually preventing the events that place these fishermen at tremendous risk. Tomorrow we'll have an opportunity, through a process that's both sharing and deliberative, to come up with resolutions and recommendations to do something about this problem, given the tools that we now have.

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Over the last few years, while trying to make a difference in mortality in a number of different industries in Alaska, we've learned that there's often more benefit to people concentrating on what they can do rather than what they can't do. Ignoring or transcending any bureaucratic boundaries and obstacles that may come initially to the fore will likely strengthen our chances for success.

The other thing that's going to be very important is collaboration in looking at who can do what among the members of the team: the fishermen themselves, industry leaders, voluntary and nongovernmental organizations such as AMSEA, and the government agencies that are responsible for doing something about these problems.

So, I look forward to the next two days, and I hope that it proves to be productive time for all. I appreciate your all being here.

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