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Title: Improving Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Through Collaboration

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Purpose

Commercial fishing in Alaska's Bering Sea / Aleutian Island (BSAI) crab fleet has been one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States and figured prominently in the development of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act (CFIVSA). Despite implementation of the CFIVSA in 1991, the BSAI crab fleet continued experiencing staggering losses. From 1990-1999, an average of eight lives were lost annually as a result of vessels capsizing or sinking, falls overboard, and industrial accidents.

Methodology

After conducting extensive casualty analysis of fatalities and vessel losses in the BSAI Crab fleet and sharing the results with key crab industry stakeholders, the Dockside Stability and Safety Compliance Check Examination program was developed by the USCG, partner agencies and the BSAI crab industry. This is an innovative regional safety program that focuses on the prevention of vessel losses and addresses the specific hazards of this dangerous fishery.

Results

Following implementation of the exam program, fatality rates declined from an average of 8 lives lost annually to an average of 1 life lost annually. There were also zero vessels lost after implementation of the program in October of 1999 through January 2005. In addition, this paper discusses the effect of the 2005 BSAI Crab Rationalization program on fleet safety.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Dockside Stability and Safety Compliance Check Examination program resulted in a 75% reduction in fatalities after implementation. This program has had a significant impact on improving safety by reducing vessel loss and subsequent fatalities in the BSAI crab industry. The high level of coordination and communication between all stakeholders, particularly between the USCG and the crab industry, should be used as a model for other fishing vessel safety intervention programs.