

# FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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## Welcome to “The Voice of Safety” — Summer Tips

by Ann Backus

With this issue of Fishermen's Voice, we are pleased to inaugurate a new column, “The Voice of Safety.” Although I have written articles from time to time for Fishermen's Voice, this issue marks the beginning of a formal agreement for a safety article every other month.

The concept is that the “voice” of safety can be the voice or perspective of a fisherman, a fisherman's wife, the U.S. Coast Guard, a safety professional, an insurance adjuster, a harbor master, etc. The article will be built around safety messages, cases – historical or current, fishing safety regulations and other topics related to safety in the commercial fishing industry.



The concept of a “culture of safety” for the fishing industry is gaining ground. The tragic deaths of New Bedford area fishermen over the last year prompted local action from the fishing community and resulted in standing-room only at fishing safety sessions this past spring.

It was after Mike Crowe attended these safety sessions to report on them, that he realized Fishermen's Voice could and should contribute to fishing safety promotion and accident prevention. The idea was formally launched at the 2006 Fishermen's Forum in Rockland, Maine.

I invite Fishermen's Voice readers to contact me with safety promotion ideas for this column. Fishermen are resourceful and creative. I have seen many gadgets and fishing practices developed by fishermen to reduce risk of injury. For example, in Stonington, a lobsterman inserted a bundle of small PVC stakes into his wash rail as fair lead, to guide the trap rope out of the boat and reduce the risk of trap rope entanglement.

### **Some Summer Tips:**

For you: Use sunscreen and replace it during the day; shield your eyes with sunglasses and a hat to reduce the chance of cataracts; drink water (not coffee) to stay hydrated. To reduce the risk of infection, clean out superficial cuts and watch for swelling or redness that might indicate infection.

For your boat: Schedule a voluntary dockside exam with the U.S. Coast Guard if you have not had one in the past year. U.S. Coast Guard personnel will make a thorough inspection of your boat and advise you of any safety items which are missing, past expiration, or worn. They will check personal flotation devices and survival suits, life rafts, EPIRBs, VHF, alarm systems, and emergency response gear required by fishing regulations. They will check fuel and cooling hoses, fire suppression, your waste discharge system and stop cocks in order to catch a worn part before it fails. They will provide safety tips and suggestions for safer fishing. Once any shortcomings are rectified, your boat will receive a decal which is an indication to marine patrol and the U.S. Coast Guard that you are in compliance with federal safety regulations. To schedule a dockside exam please contact Kevin Plowman at MSO Portland: (207) 780-3256 or [KPlowman@msoportme.uscg.mil](mailto:KPlowman@msoportme.uscg.mil).

Because it is August and can be foggy: Be sure running lights and fog signals are working; keep an eye on the weather, look out for fog banks, and check the weather forecast frequently.

Please feel free to send suggestions for articles and comments about home-grown solutions to improve safety to me by email or phone as listed below.

Have a safe summer.

Ann Backus, MS

Instructor in Occupational Health

Harvard School of Public Health

665 Huntington Avenue

Boston MA 02115

617/432-3327

[abackus@hohp.harvard.edu](mailto:abackus@hohp.harvard.edu)