

# For 2006, terminations up, casualties down

The Coast Guard issues a vessel termination when a boarding team discovers a hazardous situation for the crew or vessel. When a termination is issued, the vessel must return to port and is not permitted to resume fishing until the infraction has been corrected.

Coast Guard First District personnel report that the number of vessel terminations so far in 2006 is three-to-four times greater than the average number of annual terminations. As of mid-August the Coast Guard had sent 31 vessels home compared to the average of seven to 10 per year.

This year's terminations have included vessels from 31' to 68' in length boarded in fishing locations off: Maine, including Casco Bay and the Sheepscot area; New Hampshire, including the Hampton and Rye areas; Massachusetts from Gloucester to Buzzards Bay and East Chatham; and New York.

The reasons for terminations have mostly involved failure to comply with life raft, survival suit, fire extinguisher, and flare regulations in combination with other infractions.

## Life rafts

Life raft problems that can lead to termination include failure to have a raft when required or failure to have the raft serviced annually at a licensed servicing station.

Sometimes the expense of and/or time required for servicing are more than a fisherman feels he can spend. However, the disruption and financial loss involved when a trip is terminated far outweighs the disruption and cost involved in scheduling raft servicing for a convenient time.

And the disruption of termination or raft servicing pales in comparison to the possibility of loss of life during a fishing accident.

The Along the Coast pages of CFN have repeatedly reported over the years on how lives were saved when working life rafts were available to the crew. Back in March, for example, all three crewmen were rescued from their raft after the 44' Celtic Pride foundered 55 miles southeast of Portland.

## Survival suits

Infractions involving survival suits can include failure of the owner or captain to provide suits at all or failure to provide a survival suit that fits for each person on board.

At least one of the recent terminations involved a vessel that had only four survival suits for five fishermen.

Before heading out on a fishing vessel, check two-to-three days before departure that there is a survival suit – in excellent condition and stored above deck – that is specifically designated for you.

Try it on to make sure it fits and check

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Theresa Delaliff graphic

that: the material is free of tears and weak spots; the pillow inflates and remains inflated to keep your head above the water; a whistle and light are attached; the zippers are lubricated with a zipper lubricant such as bees wax or a synthetic waxer (not a petroleum product) and move freely; and reflective tape and the name of the vessel are on the suit as required.

## Flares, extinguishers

Coast Guard District I personnel also reported that many of the vessels with life raft and/or survival suit infractions also had expired flare violations. Others had fire extinguisher violations.

Expired flares need to be replaced to ensure that they'll work when needed in an emergency situation. Give your old flares to your local Coast Guard Marine safety officers for use in training exercises.

Fire extinguisher infractions can include having an insufficient number of extinguishers, as well as a lack of, wrong type, and/or expended extinguishers.

## Casualties down

While the number of terminations is very much higher this year, the number of casualties is down.

With the tragic death of a lobsterman in fishing gear in New Hampshire in August (see ATC page 4A), there have been four fishing fatalities in District I in 2006. This compares to a total of 14 in 2003, eight in 2004, and seven in 2005.

Hopefully, we can hold the line on fatalities for the remainder of the year. Careful attention to fishing practices and gear management and adherence with safety regulations can only help.

## FISH SAFE:

- Be sure safety equipment is in compliance with federal and state safety regulations.
- Check life raft servicing and flare expiration dates.
- Pull your survival suit out of its bag, inspect it, wax and work the zipper, and try it on.
- Keep the boat and fishing gear in good repair.
- Practice safe fishing techniques to reduce the risk of injury or death.

## Swan Net East Coast Services

3 State Pier, Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930.

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Aug. 28, 2002  
hagfish control

for hagfish, and the level of discards from hagfish culled at sea or rejected by dealers is also unknown.