



**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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Alert 11-08

### **FISHING VESSEL STABILITY**

This Safety Alert addresses the issue of unsafe loading practices onboard commercial fishing vessels.

One contributory factor in a recent major marine casualty on an uninspected commercial fishing vessel was improper loading of the vessel's fuel, water, fishing gear and catch. In this instance, the vessel's crew relied on an outdated stability book to determine the safe loading condition of the vessel. The stability book being used failed to account for heavy fishing equipment that had been removed from the vessel as well as new fish processing and equipment additions when it changed fishery operations.

As a result of this incident and due to other related casualties involving commercial fishing vessels, the U. S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** vessel owners and operators to:

Review their stability book and ensure that it reflects the vessel's current design, equipment, and operations. Stability books, even when not required by regulation, should be maintained and used to ensure proper vessel loading. Many commercial fishing vessels are not required to be inspected or have load lines but still may have stability information that discusses how the vessel should be loaded and how fuel should be burned. If the vessel details provided in the stability book do not match the actual vessel, the recommended loading procedures in the outdated stability book could negatively alter the stability;

Conduct a new stability review when a vessel changes operations (e.g. new fisheries) if such operations are not already accounted for in the vessel's stability book. For example changing fishing operations from shrimp to King Crab may involve significant equipment changes on a vessel that results in a much greater load which could alter the vessel's stability;

Conduct a new stability review if significant weight changes are made to the vessel as a result of adding or removing equipment. For example, changing the material that fishing pots are composed of may change the weight of each pot. Depending on the type of fishing being conducted, hundreds of pots could be carried. The resulting weight difference and storage location of the pots could alter the vessel's stability;

Ensure that vessel masters and engineers are familiar with the contents of their vessel's stability book and understand how to use the loading information. Stability information is useless unless put into practice. Vessel masters and engineers must be familiar with this information to ensure that their vessel is loaded as designed at all times.

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