



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE LOSS OF LIFE ABOARD THE COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N. 239264) IN THE VICINITY OF MARSH ISLAND, LA, ON JULY 23, 2025



MISLE ACTIVITY NUMBER: 8194633

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

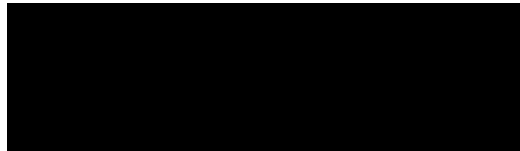
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16732/IIA #8194633
24 June 2026

**FALL OVERBOARD RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF ONE LIFE FROM THE
COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N. 239264) WHILE
CONDUCTING SHRIMPING OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF AMERICA TWO
NAUTICAL MILES SOUTH OF MARSH ISLAND, LOUISIANA ON JULY 23, 2025**

ACTION BY THE COMMANDANT

The record and the report of investigation completed for this marine casualty have been reviewed by the Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analyses, and conclusions are approved. This marine casualty investigation is closed.



E. B. SAMMS
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis (CG-INV)



16732

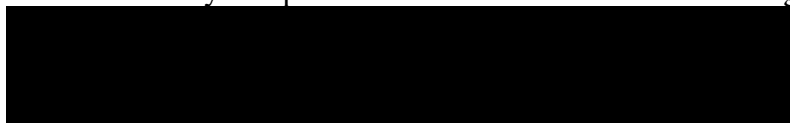
**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE LOSS OF LIFE ABOARD THE
COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N. 239264) IN THE VICINITY OF
MARSH ISLAND, LA ON JULY 23, 2025**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE COMMANDER,
COAST GUARD HEARTLAND DISTRICT**

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

1. My sincerest condolences go out to the family and friends of the mariner who lost his life in this tragic accident.
2. As the investigation points out, the fishing gear entangled on an uncharted, submerged piling, thus it is unlikely the operator could have avoided the submerged piling before the vessel's gear became entangled with it. This office will forward information about the submerged piling to the Coast Guard Heartland District's Waterways Management Division. Mariner's are encouraged to report underwater hazards when identified.
3. The Coast Guard encourages solo vessel operators to take increased risk mitigation measures when involved in single-person operations which are inherently more dangerous. Results of this case need not encourage regulatory changes requiring the active wear of life jackets for operators on commercial vessels, or for additional crew.
4. The investigation and report contain valuable information which can be used to address the factors that contributed to this marine casualty and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.



Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Chief of Prevention
Coast Guard Heartland District
By Direction

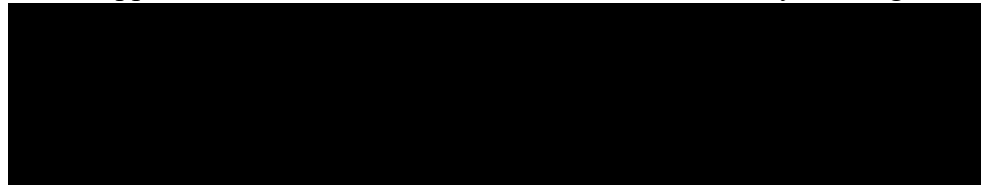


16732
February 02, 2026

**LOSS OF LIFE ABOARD THE COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N.
239264), IN THE VICINITY OF MARSH ISLAND, LA ON JULY 23, 2025**

ENDORSEMENT BY THE OFFICER IN CHARGE, MARINE INSPECTION

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.



J. S. FRANZ
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection
Houma, Louisiana



16732
January 9, 2026

**LOSS OF LIFE ABOARD THE COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N.
239264), IN THE VICINITY OF MARSH ISLAND, LA, ON JULY 23, 2025**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 21, 2025, the uninspected commercial fishing vessel GOOD GULF, a 54-foot, 25 GT wood-hulled vessel homeported in Erath, Louisiana, departed Bayou Tigre for Marsh Island, LA to conduct shrimping operations. The vessel was operated solely by its owner, a 65-year-old male with over 25 years of experience in the fishing industry. The owner was accustomed to working alone and in high heat conditions, and it was common practice not to wear personal flotation devices (PFD) during operations.

During shrimping operations near Marsh Island, the owner experienced physical distress, including chest cramping and fatigue, while conducting repairs on the vessel's generator in high heat. On July 23, 2025, the vessel lost maneuverability when its shrimping gear became entangled on a 30-foot piling. The owner communicated with his brother regarding the situation and intended to cut the vessel free. Shortly thereafter, communication was lost, and the owner was no longer observed on board. The vessel was later found pushed up on a piling with the engine running, fishing gear deployed, and the operator's personal effects left on the port side of the vessel. The owner was subsequently discovered deceased in the water by search and rescue personnel.

Through its investigation, the Coast Guard determined that the initiating event was the fouling of the fishing gear, which subsequently resulted in a loss of maneuverability and the owner entering the water. The owner later drowned due to water ingestion. Causal factors contributing to this casualty were: 1) Inadequate Hazard Awareness, 2) Fatigue and Physical Condition of the Owner, 3) Lack of Railings and Nonskid on Vessel, 4) Lack of Requirements for PFD Use on Commercial Fishing Vessels, 5) Lack of Regulatory Requirements to Prevent Solo Operation and 6) Failure to Utilize PFD Due to Operational Norms.



LOSS OF LIFE ABOARD THE COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL GOOD GULF (O.N. 239264), IN THE VICINITY OF MARSH ISLAND, LA, ON JULY 23, 2025

INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT

1. Preliminary Statement

1.1. This marine casualty investigation was conducted and this report was submitted in accordance with Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 4.07, and under the authority of Title 46, United States Code (USC) Chapter 63. Under 46 USC § 6308, no part of a report of a marine casualty investigation, including its findings of fact, opinions, recommendations, deliberations, or conclusions shall be admissible as evidence or subject to discovery in any civil or administrative proceedings, other than an administrative proceeding initiated by the United States.

1.2. No individuals, organizations, or parties were designated as a party-in-interest in accordance with 46 CFR Subsection 4.03-10.

1.3. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) was the lead agency for all evidence collection activities in this investigation. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) conducted a preliminary investigation, and the owner was recovered by the St. Mary's Parish Sheriff's Office.

1.4. All times listed in this report are approximate and are in Central Daylight Time using a 24 hour format.

2. Vessel Involved in the Incident



Figure 1. Photograph of Commercial Fishing Vessel GOOD GULF taken by the USCG July 25, 2025.

Official Name:	GOOD GULF
Identification Number:	239264 – Official Number (US)
Flag:	United States
Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type	Commercial Fishing Vessel
Build Year:	1939
Gross Tonnage:	25 GT
Length:	54 feet
Main/Primary Propulsion:	Diesel
Owner/Operator:	Terral J. Melancon [REDACTED]

3. Deceased, Missing, and/or Injured Persons

Relationship to Vessel	Sex	Age	Status
Owner	Male	65	Deceased

4. Finding of Fact

4.1. The Incident:

4.1.1. On July 21, 2025, at 0700, the GOOD GULF, a 54-foot, 25 GT wood, uninspected commercial fishing vessel homeported in Erath, LA, departed the dock at Bayou Tigre and headed towards Marsh Island to conduct shrimping operations. The vessel was operated solely by its owner.

4.1.2. The owner was observed wearing boots, blue jeans, and a white t-shirt upon departure. It was common practice for him to operate alone and work long hours in high heat conditions.

4.1.3. On July 22, 2025, the vessel arrived near Marsh Island, LA south of New Iberia, and continued shrimping operations. The maximum average temperature that day was 94°F with calm seas.

4.1.4. On July 22, 2025, at approximately 0810, the owner experienced cramping in his chest while conducting repairs on the vessel's generator, working in a high heat environment and experiencing fatigue.

4.1.5. On July 23, 2025, at 0810, the owner deployed shrimping gear near Marsh Island. Shortly after, the vessel lost maneuverability due to its gear becoming caught on a 30-foot piling. The piling was not identified on navigational charts or otherwise marked.

4.1.6. During a routine communication check at approximately 0820, the owner informed his brother that his gear was hung up and he intended to cut the vessel free. The vessel was located 3NM south of Marsh Island.

4.1.7. Communication with the owner was lost at approximately 0830.

4.1.8. At an unknown time, the owner removed his boots, shorts, and shirt, and was left in socks and underwear. He subsequently entered the water; it is not known if the owner intentionally entered the water to free the vessel from the piling or if he fell overboard.

4.1.9. At 0910, the owner's brother, operating the CFV TERMINATOR, investigated the GOOD GULF's last known position. He found the vessel pushed up on a piling with the engine running, not in gear, fishing nets down, and no one onboard.

4.1.10. The brother boarded the vessel and found the owner's bolt cutters, boots, phone, and Crocs on the port side.

4.1.11. At 1146, the brother contacted the U.S. Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Command Center for assistance.

4.1.12. A search for the missing owner was conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard and local agencies. On July 23, 2025, at 2017, the owner's body was located by a Coast Guard MH-60 and recovered by the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office with assistance from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

4.1.13. The body was positively identified by the brother and transferred to the Iberia Parish Coroner's Office.

4.1.14. On July 24, 2025, at 1500, the owner was declared deceased due to drowning by the Iberia Parish Coroner. No autopsy or post mortem toxicology tests were conducted.

4.1.15. No CG-2692 was provided due to the mariner being deceased.

4.2. Additional/Supporting Information:

4.2.1. Homeported in Erath, LA, the GOOD GULF was a 1939 build, wood-hulled vessel with no gunwale, railings, nonskid, or a voluntary Coast Guard commercial fishing vessel exam decal. The vessel typically operated in the Gulf of America.

4.2.2. The owner was considered to be in good physical condition and a good swimmer by family members.

4.2.3. The owner had over 25 years of experience in the fishing industry and was accustomed to operating alone.

4.2.4. While the GOOD GULF was equipped with a marine radar system, it is unknown if the owner was actively using it at the time of the incident or if the radar, if utilized, would have detected the piling.

4.2.5. The environmental conditions at the time of the incident included high temperatures (up to 94°F) and calm seas.

4.2.6. The owner did not wear a lifejacket while shrimping; it was not common practice to use PFDs during operations.

4.2.7. The practice of not wearing lifejackets (PFDs) during operations was common among local fishermen.

5. Analysis

5.1. Inadequate Hazard Awareness. The operator failed to detect and adjust his course to avoid a submerged piling, a hazard in the fishing area. This resulted in the vessel's gear becoming entangled, preventing further operations. It remains unclear whether the operator was aware of the piling and failed to avoid it, or if he struck it inadvertently due to insufficient time to identify and react. Had the piling been properly detected and avoided, the vessel would not have become fouled, and the subsequent chain of events leading to the fatality may have been prevented.

5.2. Fatigue and Physical Condition of the Owner. The owner was fatigued to the extent he required a break and discussed it with his brother over the radio. The owner had been preparing for and conducting shrimp operations and generator repairs since early morning on the day of the incident. Additionally, the air temperature on the day of the incident was above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Working in temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, particularly during strenuous activity, poses health risks like heat-related illnesses, dehydration, fatigue, dizziness, and an elevated heart rate. Fatigue induces physical exhaustion, resulting in reduced muscle strength, coordination, and overall physical performance. It is reasonable to assume that had the owner not been in a fatigued state, he could have responded better to his working conditions and reduced the risk of potentially falling overboard and drowning.

5.3. Lack of Railings and Nonskid on Vessel. The vessel's lack of railings and nonskid surfaces onboard may have prevented a fall overboard. Had adequate railings and nonskid surfaces—though not strictly mandated for this type of vessel, with a minimum of 39.5 inches for similar uninspected vessels—been installed, the likelihood of him potentially falling overboard may have been significantly reduced. His decision to remove his boots prior to freeing the fouled gear further increased the risk of slipping. It is reasonable to assume that, due to the lack of railings and nonskid surfaces, the owner was unable to prevent potentially falling into the water, which ultimately led to his drowning. Had the vessel had adequate railings and nonskid, the mariner may have been able to potentially avoid falling overboard.

5.4. Lack of Requirements for PFD Use on Commercial Fishing Vessels. It is common practice for commercial fishing vessel crew members to not wear PFDs while working out on deck, likely due to the perceived lack of maneuverability when wearing one while handling fishing gear. Although 46 CFR Subchapter C outlines requirements for lifesaving equipment to be carried on board commercial fishing vessels, it does not mandate the actual use of PFDs by crew members while working on deck or near the water. No law or regulation currently requires crew members to wear a PFD while working near the side of a vessel. This regulatory gap leaves crew members vulnerable in the event of accidental falls overboard, as the presence of PFDs on board alone does not ensure their use or provide adequate protection. PFDs are crucial to keeping persons afloat and enable rescue of persons in the water. Even if the person wearing a PFD is unconscious, the flotation will enable the person to remain above the water. Had a regulation been in place requiring the use of PFDs, the owner might have worn one. Not having a means of flotation once the owner entered the water significantly decreased his chance of survival.

5.5. Lack of Regulatory Requirements to Prevent Solo Operation. At the time of the incident, the owner was operating the CFV GOOD GULF alone. No federal regulation prohibits solo operation of commercial fishing vessels. Operating alone eliminates the

possibility of immediate assistance, witness reports, or rapid emergency response in the event of a man-overboard situation. In this case, no person was present to observe the owner entering the water, activate a man-overboard alert, or initiate an immediate search. The vessel was only discovered later by the owner's brother conducting a safety/welfare check. If even one additional crewmember had been required to be onboard, the chances of noticing and reacting to the incident would have improved significantly and possibly increased the owner's chances of survival.

5.6. Failure to Utilize Personal Flotation Device Due to Operational Norms. The owner did not wear a PFD while working on deck. It was the owner's operational norm to forgo a PFD, having operated for over 25 years without incident and believing it unnecessary. It is common practice among commercial fishermen to not wear PFDs due to concerns about reduced maneuverability and interference with handling fishing gear. The owner's decision reflected a widely accepted industry approach that wearing a PFD can impede efficient work on deck. This choice, while consistent with industry practice, left the owner without a means of flotation when he entered the water, significantly reducing his chance of survival. Had the owner utilized a PFD, he might have remained afloat even if unconscious, and his death might have been prevented.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Determination of Cause:

6.1.1. The initiating event for this casualty was the fouling of the fishing gear which led to a loss of maneuverability. Causal factors leading to this event were:

6.1.1.1. Inadequate Hazard Awareness resulted in the operator failing to detect and avoid a submerged piling, causing the fishing gear to become entangled and operations to cease.

6.1.2. The fouled gear resulted in the next subsequent event, which was the owner entering the water. Causal factors leading to this event were:

6.1.2.1. The owner failed to recognize and mitigate the effects of fatigue and physical distress while operating in high heat conditions.

6.1.2.2. The GOOD GULF lacked railings and nonskid surfaces, which increased the risk of falls and accidental entry into the water during vessel operations.

6.1.3. The owner entering the water resulted in the next subsequent event of the owner's death due to asphyxiation from drowning. Causal factors leading to this event were:

6.1.3.1. The absence of regulatory requirements for personal flotation device (PFD) use on commercial fishing vessels resulted in the owner not wearing a lifejacket at the time of the incident.

6.1.3.2. The lack of regulatory requirements prohibiting solo operation of commercial fishing vessels allowed the owner to work alone, increasing the risk during emergency situations due to the absence of additional oversight or support.

6.1.3.3. The failure of the owner to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) due to longstanding operational norms and industry practices that wearing a PFD impedes fishing operations.

6.2. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by Any Coast Guard Credentialed Mariner Subject to Action Under 46 USC Chapter 77: There were no potential acts of misconduct, incompetence, negligence, unskillfulness, or violations of law by a credentialed mariner identified as part of this investigation.

6.3. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by U.S. Coast Guard Personnel, or any other person: There were no potential acts of misconduct, incompetence, negligence, unskillfulness, or violations of law by Coast Guard employees or any other person that contributed to this casualty.

6.4. Evidence of Act(s) Subject to Civil Penalty: No evidence of potential acts warranting civil penalty was identified.

6.5. Evidence of Criminal Act(s): This investigation did not identify potential violations of criminal law.

6.6. Need for New or Amended U.S. Law or Regulation: This investigation did not identify potential matters needing new or amended U.S. law or regulation.

6.7. Unsafe Actions or Conditions that Were Not Causal Factors.

6.7.1. No unsafe actions or conditions were identified that were not causal factors.

7. Actions Taken Since the Incident

7.1. There were no actions taken since the incident.

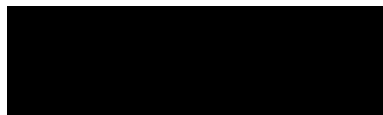
8. Recommendations

8.1.Safety Recommendation:

8.1.1. There were no proposed actions to add new or amend existing U.S. laws or regulations, industry standards, or U.S. Coast Guard policies and procedures as part of this investigation.

8.2.Administrative Recommendations:

8.2.1. Recommend this investigation be closed



Lieutenant Junior Grade, U.S. Coast Guard
Investigating Officer