



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

FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector Western Alaska and U.S. Arctic

June 25, 2025
Anchorage, AK

Findings of Concern 009-25

**UNSAFE STOWAGE OF VESSEL'S PROVISIONS LEADS TO
SIGNIFICANT INJURY**

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. In October 2024, a commercial fishing vessel was operating in the Bering Sea, approximately 140 nautical miles north of Cold Bay, Alaska. While transiting through the characteristically rough seas of early fall, a processor aboard the vessel opened the door to an onboard freezer. At that moment, the vessel experienced a significant roll, causing several cases of frozen fish to shift and fall. The processor managed to block two cases at eye level, but a third dislodged from its shelf and struck his foot. The resulting injury required professional medical treatment, led to missed work, and necessitated his departure from the vessel to recover.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. Vessels at sea are inherently subject to pitching, rolling, and yawing due to waves, wind, and swell. The Bering Sea, in particular, is known for experiencing severe weather conditions, which significantly increase the frequency and intensity of vessel motion. Once a roll is initiated, it cannot be feasibly stopped, and unsecured items onboard are prone to shifting or falling. In this case, the vessel rolled at the exact moment the freezer door was opened, creating a scenario in which several heavy cases of frozen fish slid freely toward the processor. With no physical barrier or restraint in place, and despite quick reactions, injury was unavoidable under the circumstances.

This incident highlights the importance of securing all onboard equipment - not just cargo. The use of cargo netting, removable metal bars, or storing heavy items in smaller, fixed containers could have prevented the cases from dislodging and potentially avoided injury. "Securing for sea" should be applied to all items with the potential to shift, especially those heavy enough to cause harm if they fall.



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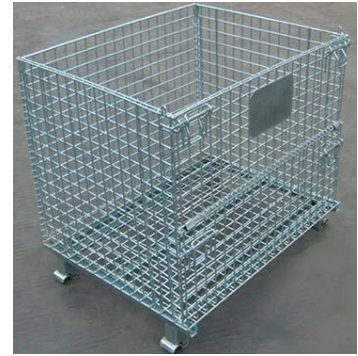
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Cargo Netting



Metal Bars (Removeable)



Smaller, Affixed Containers

Visualization of Various Securing Options

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following voluntary actions for the owner/operators of similar vessels to consider in order to reduce the likelihood of recurrence:

- Conduct a review of onboard storage areas, including freezers, refrigerators, pantries, and other relevant locations, to assess the methods of loading items. Particular attention should be given to heavy items stored on flat surfaces, as these may gain significant momentum if the vessel experiences heeling.
- Consider the implementation of additional safety measures to secure items onboard, such as the use of cargo netting, removable or adjustable metal bars, storage in smaller containers that could be semi-permanently affixed within the space, or other locking and latching mechanisms designed to safely prevent movement of items.
- Implement training programs for personnel who work in and around these areas to recognize when a vessel is beginning to roll. Advise crewmembers to keep doors closed when opening them would risk items falling out of their storage location.
- Analyze whether the vessel experiences more pitching (fore-and-aft) or rolling (side-to-side) rotation during normal operations and incorporate that information into design-based decisions when designating storage areas and for freezer and refrigerator installations.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact the Sector Western Alaska and U.S. Arctic Investigations Division by email at WesternAlaskaIO@uscg.mil.