

Report to the 2016 Commercial Fishing Safety Advisory Committee

Alaska – District 17 2016 Summary

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Challenges/Concerns:

In the past year as the District 17 CFVS Program Coordinator, I have seen congressional and industry pressure create uncertainty and delay or changes to the implementation/development of certain sections of the law. This back and forth with out of water survival craft, class construction and the Alternate Safety Compliance Program (now Enhanced Oversight Program) have made communicating with industry difficult and frankly, we did not seem very credible at times I'm sure.

Mandatory dockside examinations present logistic, budgetary and geographic challenges for the D17 fishing vessel program in the Arctic region. Outreach visits and the development of achievable safety equipment carriage exemptions with the Norton Sound Economic Development Council (NSEDC), Coastal Villages Regional Fisheries (CVRF) and other partners are helping facilitate compliance with the mandatory examinations.

Rationalization of the Bering Sea crab fishery along with other industry decisions have created a surplus of vessels that previously were considered fishing vessels with the ability to operate as a part-time tender. Many of these vessels now engage only in tendering, placing some of them into the regulatory position of requiring a load line. Load line may be expensive or unachievable, so an alternative compliance approach may be in the near future.

Successes/Achievements:

To date in CY-16 there has been only 1 operational commercial fishing fatality in District 17 (Unobserved MOB from an anchored tender in Juneau on Aug 14th)

As of early September, District 17 examiners conducted approximately 1,484 dockside examinations to date in roughly 32 communities with several fall outreach trips still planned in advance of the southeast dive and Bering Sea crab fisheries.

Initiatives:

Looking forward, District 17 continues to work on gathering data for the Enhanced Oversight Program (EOP) (formerly ASCP), working on fish tender/load line alternatives, how subchapter M affects fishing vessels/tenders towing materials in support of the fisheries, implementation of new portable fire extinguisher regulations, NPRM and mandatory exam compliance. Community outreach, education, media and data collection from partner agencies (NOAA, ADFG) are all being utilized to identify the mandatory exam fleet.

District 17 continues to work closely with District 13 on ACSA, engineer licensing, GMDSS, EOP development/implementation, fish tender load line issues and recent final rule regarding fire extinguisher classification and maintenance changes.

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