

## **CHAPTER 5 – PERSON OVERBOARD RECOVERY**

Time: One-half hour

**GOAL:** Students will understand actions to be taken when a person is in the water and master the use of appropriate recovery equipment.

**Need Statement:** Effective recovery procedures in person in the water situations can mean the difference between recovering a survivor or a body.

1. During 2013-2014, 31% of all commercial fishing fatalities were due to falls overboard.
2. During 2010-2014, of the fishermen who were reported to be wearing a PFD or immersion suit during a vessel disaster, 96% survived. In the same time period, of the fishermen who were not reported to be wearing a PFD or immersion suit during a vessel disaster, 73% survived.
3. Most people do not know they are going to fall overboard, until it happens. Wearing a PFD is vital.
4. In a person overboard situation, the crew's familiarity with recovery procedures can make the difference between life and death.

**OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this presentation, the student will be able to:

1. List at least 3 steps in preventing a person overboard situation.
2. Demonstrate at least six steps in person overboard recovery.
3. List one advantage and one disadvantage of two different vessel-maneuvering techniques.
4. Recognize at least two commercially made retrieval devices.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Examples of throwable recovery devices and different PFDs.

## **TEACHING TIPS:**

- To stimulate class discussion, ask class if anyone has been involved with any overboard emergencies, but be sensitive.
- Show a video that demonstrates the use of a commercial recovery device.
- Ask students to think of what they can rig, or have rigged, on their own vessels that would make recovering a person easier.
- Be prepared to discuss treatment of a hypothermic victim once onboard. Review Hypothermia chapter.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE:**

### **I. PREVENTION AND PREPARATION**

- a. Master's responsibilities.
  - i. Ensure crew is aware of information in emergency instructions (one such set of instructions is the Commercial Fishing Vessel Emergency Instruction and Drill Manual in appendix).
  - ii. Ensure crew practices recovery methods during monthly drills.
  - iii. Ensure crew is aware of vessel's protocol for deck safety: going out on deck alone/at night, peeing off deck, into scuppers etc.
- b. Crew's responsibilities.
  - i. Keep deck(s) clear of hazards.
  - ii. Follow instructions, participate in drills, need to wear PFDs when at risk.
  - iii. Wear personal marker lights, light reflective tape, knife.
  - iv. Know how to recover skipper from the sea.
- c. Be cautious when boarding, especially under hazardous conditions.
  - i. Vessel to vessel at sea.
  - ii. Vessel to dock or dock to vessel.

### **II. ESSENTIAL ACTIONS BY VICTIM**

- A. Focus on controlling your breathing.
- B. Grab marker if thrown. Do not try to swim after vessel.
- C. Assume H.E.L.P. position - conserve energy.

### **III. ESSENTIAL ACTIONS BY CREW**

- a. Throw marker.
  - i. Anything that floats.
  - ii. Life ring.
    - 1. If left attached to vessel, victim may swim for it.
    - 2. Victim can place ring around torso to allow core to be out of water.
    - 3. May be needed to assist getting victim on board.

- b. Sound alarm.
  - i. Alert all crew.
  - ii. Operator marks position on electronic navigation system.
  - iii. Set up communication relay between wheelhouse and deck.
- c. Post lookout.
  - i. Eyes and pointing hand never leave victim or last position.
  - ii. Lookout best positioned so will be seen by vessel operator as well.
  - iii. Try to keep hand pointing at victim.
  - iv. Throw smoke flare to mark location.
- d. Maneuver vessel to return to victim.
  - i. Simple turn
    - 1. Swing stern away from victim.
    - 2. Use in situation where casualty is noted immediately.
    - 3. Advantage - fastest turn.
    - 4. Disadvantage- victim must be in sight.
  - ii. Williamson turn
    - 1. Turn rudder toward side from which person fell until vessel is heading 60 degrees from original course.
    - 2. Turn rudder to opposite direction until heading about 20 degrees short of reciprocal, put the rudder amidships so that the vessel will return to reciprocal course. This will place the person overboard on the side of vessel from which he/she fell.
    - 3. Use when casualty is not in sight or visibility is bad.
    - 4. Advantage - will return to original position via reciprocal course.
    - 5. Disadvantage - takes longer to complete turn.
- e. Recovery.
  - i. Bring victim alongside vessel.
    - 1. Leeward side of vessel preferred by many.
      - a. Shelters victim from seas.
      - b. Person can be brought up on low side of vessel.

- c. Danger of vessel being blown over victim by wind or seas.
  - 2. Windward side of vessel reduces chance of being blown over victim.
    - ii. Standby rescue swimmer dons immersion suit with rescue line attached.
    - iii. Prepare vessel's hoisting tackle to assist in recovery.
    - iv. Prepare to launch rescue craft if needed.
    - v. Recognize the problems trying to get a victim out of the water
      - 1. Victim's weight
      - 2. Victim's height
      - 3. Lack of help from victim
      - 4. Freeboard
- f. Treat victim.
  - i. Lift horizontally if it takes no longer.
  - ii. Bring victim onboard gently.
    - 1. Victim's front, not back over rail if possible.
    - 2. Do not forcibly remove victim's hands from flotation once onboard.
    - 3. Prepare for victim to collapse.
  - iii. Treat for hypothermia (see Hypothermia – Section D).
  - iv. Monitor victim for at least 24 hours.
- g. Contact U.S. Coast Guard and/or other vessels if:
  - i. Victim is not found immediately.
  - ii. If medical attention/advice is needed.

#### **IV. IMPORTANCE OF PFD USE**

- a. A victim's primary need is to prevent drowning until rescuers have time to reach the victim.
- b. Always wear a PFD when in high-risk situations/conditions.
- c. Type of PFD is not as important as its wearability - well over 90% of falls overboard are unexpected even moments before the fall!

#### **V. SUMMARY**

- a. Stress importance of wearing PFDs and practicing during monthly emergency drills.

- b. Review main points of lesson.

**Review Questions:**

1. List at least three things to prevent man overboard.  
(keep decks free of slime/seaweed, don't go outside alone w/o notifying others, use the head, etc.)
2. List six steps in person overboard recovery.  
(Answer: throw marker, sound alarm, post lookout, maneuver vessel to return to victim, recovery, treat victim)
3. List one advantage and one disadvantage of the two different vessel-manoeuvring techniques.  
(Answer: Simple turn advantage – fastest turn, simple turn disadvantage – victim must be in sight; Williamson turn advantage – will return to original position via reciprocal course, Williamson turn disadvantage – takes longer to complete turn)