

Summary of Man Overboard Sub-Committee

In October 2019 the Commercial Fishing Safety Advisory Committee (CFSAC) accepted U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) Task Statement #01-19(b) to develop voluntary guidelines for preventing and responding to Man Overboard (MOB) incidents. A MOB sub-committee was formed to develop recommendations for the full advisory committee and the U.S. Coast Guard. The MOB sub-committee met several times from November 2019 through March 2020 to carry out the task. A review of existing equipment (personnel floatation devices, recovery devices, ancillary equipment), best practices (including training and promotion efforts), and ways to effectively communicate with the fishing industry participants was discussed. Due to significantly increased workload demands created by the COVID-19, the workgroup was put on hold between March – September 2020.

Findings:

- Man Overboard (MOB) is the 2nd largest cause of fatalities in commercial fishing industry. From 2000–2016, a total of 204 commercial fishermen died after going overboard.
- Investigations of fatal MOB incidents by the USCG and research by NIOSH demonstrate that increased efforts are needed to reduce these preventable fatalities.
- There is a wide variety of affordable equipment and devices available to reduce fatalities associated with MOB event.
- MOB training is generally available and existing regulations requiring emergency drills and instruction for MOB are simple to perform and do not create significant operational constraints to commercial fishing activities.
- The main obstacles to reducing MOB fatalities are not lack of equipment or availability of training, but instead are related to overcoming longstanding and engrained cultural attitudes held by fishermen that PFDs are not important, practical, or masculine.
- Direct interactions and engagement between the USCG and fishermen, especially when there is a focus PFD use and MOB drills during the course of dockside exams, is a key strategy to focusing commercial fishermen's attention on the MOB issue.
- Social and traditional media campaigns highlighting PFDs and related accessories, MOB training, and normalizing PFD use is a preferable method of outreach to commercial fishermen. Social media is especially important for younger fishermen.

Recommendation #1: The MOB Sub-Committee recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard modify fishing vessel safety dockside exam to evaluate a vessel's MOB prevention and response procedures and inquire about on-board PFD use.

Evaluate MOB Prevention and Response Procedures.

1. Ask the Master to provide a verbal summary of the last man overboard drills held.
2. Discuss with the Master what equipment was used during the last MOB drill.
 - a. Ask the Master to walk through, or if time permits demonstrate how MOB recovery equipment is used;
 - b. Discuss what techniques are used to recover the person from the water;
 - c. Discuss what follow-up procedures are used on the MOB victim.
3. Ask the Master if all crew participated in the drill and what lessons were learned.
4. Verify whether the drill MOB logged.
5. Verify whether the Watch, Quarter and Station Bill accurately reflects the personnel needed to conduct the described MOB drill.
6. If the Examiner feels that the Master does not have sufficient competency or experience with regards to the previous MOB drill, the examiner should evaluate whether to require another drill prior to issuing a dockside exam decal.

Inquire About On-Board PFD Policy.

1. Does the vessel have a policy for PFD use while on deck?
2. Encourage the Master to post a weather resistant decals with a simplified PFD policy.
3. Review various types and styles of various approved and non-approved PFDs.
4. Provide the Master with a NIOSH summary of available MOB prevention and recovery information appropriate for the vessel's gear type.

Recommendation #2: The MOB Sub-Committee recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard, Commercial Fishing Safety Advisory Committee members, and other fishing industry leaders work with National and local fishing industry publications (and their social media units) to develop a year-long promotional campaign on MOB Issues. A recommended “story board” summary of ideas is as follows:

Jan 2021 - Message from the USCG / Intro Story / What is the Problem & Why is It Solvable?

Mar 2021 - Gear Issue / Focus on PFDs / Recovery Devices / Technology (Including PMEL lights)

May 2021 - MOB Training (AMSEA / NPFVOA / Sector Portland Outreach & Training)

July 2021 - Regional Success Stories (Bristol Bay Reserve / NEC – FPSS – MOST / SFM)

Sep 2021 - MOB Prevention thru Design / Rescue Stories - Don't Forget Victim Care / Pictures of crew wearing PFDs

Nov 2021 - MOB Recovery (Home Grown Solutions) / MOB for vessels with a single operator

A similar story board can be run in another fishing industry magazine in alternate months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec) to maximize exposure of the MOB issue to fishing industry participants.

Recommendation #3: The MOB Sub-Committee recommends that Coast Guard District Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinators work with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to develop regional and local Marine Safety Information Bulletins which detail MOB fatality statistics by gear type and fishery, specific local incidents (fatality, near miss, success story), and lessons learned from those incidents. MSIBs should be shared with fishermen during dockside exam as well as be promoted on USCG social media accounts. Dockside examiners should be prepared to discuss situations leading up to man overboard incidents on vessels using specific gears and specific fisheries.