



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

## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

**Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy**

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Alert 02-12

### **OVERLOADED LIFTING GEAR ON FISHING VESSELS**

Recently, several catastrophic failures of masts, booms, and lift cables have occurred on purse seine fishing vessels that have resulted in loss of life and severe injuries. Over the years many casualties have occurred onboard all types of fishing vessels attempting to haul in catches that exceeded the capacity of their winches, hoists, and associated equipment. These types of casualties are not unusual. This alert serves to remind all purse seine fishing vessel owners/operators and other fishing segments to ensure safe use of the haul equipment particularly matching the size and the capacity of the nets to the rated size and capacity of the winch/haul/hoist equipment, taking into account safety factors for various species, and other concerns such as the variable platform that a rolling fishing vessel and variable catch presents.



Owners / operators, and vessel *Insurers* must ensure that vessel winch, haul and hoist systems are not modified by crew members to increase the lifting capacity beyond the rated design which in some cases can be done very easily. Such boosting of hydraulic systems must be prohibited and certain components should be protected with special seals. The machinery should be properly maintained and records kept in a historical log. It is imperative that owners / operators ensure every load bearing structure and its associated components are maintained in original condition, that they will be operated as designed using all appropriate safety margins for anticipated working

conditions. All such equipment will experience fatigue over time and as result must be inspected and monitored routinely. Bearings, limit switches, brakes, safety devices, sheaves, cables and other components, should be routinely inspected by certified organizations.

For owners / operators of purse seine and other fishing vessels, the Coast Guard strongly recommends:

- Know the design limits of load bearing structures and winches, hoist, and haul components;
- Ensure they are not modified by crew members; properly maintained; and are inspected and tested on a regular basis. Repair/replace components immediately when deficiencies are discovered;
- Evaluate and revise operational procedures as needed.

This Safety Alert is provided for informational purposes and does not relieve any foreign or domestic requirement. Please visit <http://fishsafe.info> for additional fishing safety information.

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