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## Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Requirements for Commercial Fishing Vessels

Regulations for commercial fishing vessels can often be confusing because of when they apply and to which type vessels. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requirements for a ship radio station license are dependent upon where the vessel operates, its size, and of course whether or not it is required to have radio transmitting and receiving capabilities.

The FCC published a Fact Sheet on Ship Radio Stations that provided guidance and answered questions regarding licensing requirements (<http://wireless.fcc.gov/marine/fctsht14.html>). Vessels that are required or compelled by treaty or statute to be equipped with specified telecommunications equipment are considered to be "compulsory ships" for a license.

Other vessels not required to have telecommunications equipment installed, but do so by choice, are considered to be "voluntary ships." These vessels are not required to, but may apply for a license. Generally, commercial fishing vessels (CFVs) 20 meters (65.6 feet) or less in length are considered "voluntary ships." However, the key element in consideration of licensing requirements is whether or not the vessel is required to carry telecommunications equipment.

CFVs that are considered "compulsory ships" and **must** obtain a FCC Ship Station License:

- Power-driven vessels that are over 20 meters in length and operate on navigable waters;
- Documented vessels, regardless of length, that operate beyond the Boundary Line, or operate with more than 16 individuals on board;
- Fish tender vessels that engage in the Aleutian Trade; and
- Any vessel that carries a MF/HF single side band radiotelephone, satellite communications, or telegraphy.

CFVs that are considered "voluntary ships" and are not required to, but **may**, obtain a FCC Ship Station License:

- Power-driven vessels that are 20 meters or less in length operating on navigable waters;
- Documented vessels that are 20 meters or less in length operating **ONLY** inside the Boundary Line;
- A vessel that is **ONLY** required to carry an EPIRB;
- A vessel that is State-numbered; and
- A vessel not otherwise addressed and **ONLY** operates domestically.

Individuals on board a vessel with communications equipment are not required to obtain a Restricted Radiotelephone Operator Permit as long as the vessel does not travel to a foreign port or communicates with foreign stations.

A Ship Station License must be kept on board the vessel and should be posted. If a license application is pending, a copy of FCC Form 506A, temporary operating authority, should be on board. The license must display the correct name and/or number of the vessel, list the current owner or manager of the vessel, should list all radio transmitting equipment (including an EPIRB), list all authorized operating frequencies, and be stamped with the FCC Seal.

Ship Station Licenses are valid for ten years. The license must be updated if there are changes to the licensee or vessel name and address, documentation, or equipment. The FCC will send a **Renewal Reminder Notice** approximately 120 days prior to the expiration date of the license. **FCC Form 605** along with the proper payment must be submitted to renew your license or make an update.

Questions may be addressed at: 1-888-CALLFCC or <http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/>. Forms are also available online at <http://www/fcc/gov/formpage.html> or by calling the FCC's Forms Distribution Center at (800) 418-3676.

(For more safety information or to view other references, visit our Web Site at [www.FishSafe.info](http://www.FishSafe.info).)

