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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL SAFETY PROGRAM

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Take care of your vessel & it will take care of you.

Fishing Vessel Leif; July 6, 2005. Official U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer Chris Leibrant

From 1994 through 2004, 1,398 vessels were lost. Of those vessels, over 80% did not have a voluntary dockside examination decal. This article highlights the fact that the leading cause of fatalities in the commercial fishing industry is loss of the vessel.

Recent investigation has uncovered that accident rates increase with fishing vessel length, showing the strongest concentration of vessel losses in the 60 ft. to 70 ft. range. While there are a variety of factors that could influence this increase in accident rates, the likely explanation is larger vessels generally are capable of operating further from shore, with the potential for longer voyages or exposure to more severe environmental conditions. However, vessel losses can not be solely attributed to length. Other similarities, such as vessel age and hull material are shared among those vessels that are lost.

Surprisingly, findings show that 616 (44%) of the fishing vessel losses occurred while in transit (non-fishing mode). Other activities prior to vessel loss are-Moored, Inbound, Outbound, Towing, Being Towed and Fueling, totaling 919 (71%) fishing vessel losses.

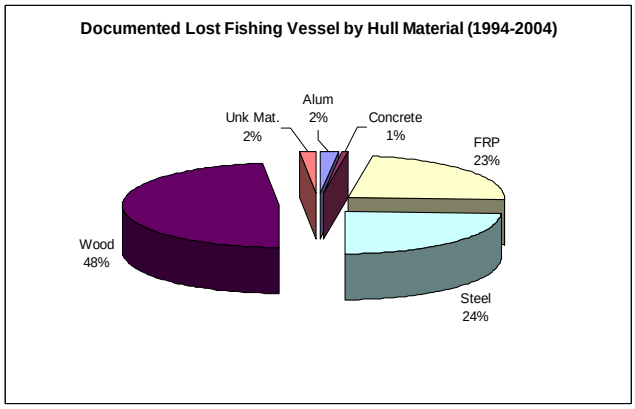
Flooding is the number one cause of vessel losses. Vessel flooding contributed to 35% of the vessel losses throughout the period reviewed. The major causes leading to flooding were broken down into five categories consisting of Hull/Machinery Failure, Weather, Human Factors, External Fault, and Unknown. The area that contributed most to vessel flooding was Hull/Machinery Failure. Hull/Machinery Failure accounted for 69% of the fishing vessel losses due to flooding and 25% of all casualties involving fishing vessel loss for this period.

Fires on board vessels were the second leading cause of vessel losses, contributing to 20% of the losses during this period. Sixty Eight percent of the fire locations occurred within the vessel's Engine Room.

Documented Lost Fishing Vessels Age and Hull Material 1994 - 2004

Age	<= 10	11 <= 20	21 <= 30	31 <= 40	41 <= 50	51 <= 60	61 <= 70	71 <= 80	81 <= 90	91 <=100	Unk Age	Total	% of Total
Alum	2	8	4	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	2%
Concrete	0	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1%
FRP	6	56	162	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	261	23%
Steel	14	44	112	73	17	6	8	0	1	0	2	277	24%
Wood	1	15	143	122	64	91	47	32	26	5	2	548	48%
Unk Mat	0	3	9	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	2%
Total	23	127	435	237	89	97	55	32	27	5	6	1133	100 %

Fishing vessel losses occurred predominately within the vessel age range of 21 to 40 years. This age group accounted for 672 (59%) of the fishing vessel losses. Vessels made of wood followed by steel hulled vessels sustained the greatest loss over this period.



The majority of lives lost (51%) in the commercial fishing industry vessels are directly attributed to loss of the vessel **The best way to prevent fatalities is to prevent vessel losses.** Routine preventive maintenance and periodic examinations can reduce the number of vessel losses and the number of fatalities.

The Coast Guard's no-fault, voluntary dockside examination program continues to be our most effective outreach component. These exams raise awareness of vessel watertight integrity, stability, and maintenance issues that can lead to vessel loss. Issues identified during exams are not reported for law enforcement action but are used to help fishermen improve the safety of their vessels.

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