



# UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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Washington, DC

Alert 12-08

### WATERTIGHT DOORS

This Safety Alert addresses the importance of properly maintaining and closing watertight doors. Unfortunately, marine casualties, often resulting in loss of life and property, continue to be linked to improperly maintained or closed watertight doors!

One of the contributory factors in a recent major marine casualty on an uninspected commercial fishing vessel was the failure to properly maintain and keep closed watertight doors on the vessel's weather deck. In this incident one watertight door was not properly dogged down, permitting it to open and let water flood a space below the main deck. Another watertight door on the vessel's main deck was not maintained and as a result, it leaked, permitting water to enter an adjacent space.

Over 42% of all marine casualties on fishing vessels involve flooding that in most cases could have been prevented or minimized by the proper use of watertight doors. Two safety alerts have been issued in the past two years emphasizing the importance of maintaining watertight doors and keeping them closed at all times while underway except when actually being used.

As a result of this incident and due to other related casualties, the U. S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** vessel owners and operators to:

Regularly inspect the condition of all watertight doors on their vessels including the gasket and knife-edge to ensure that the doors close properly when dogged down securely. Watertight door gaskets should not be painted; any paint discovered on the gasket should be removed. Excessive gaps between the gasket ends should be avoided and repaired upon discovery;

Periodically perform either a chalk or light test on all watertight doors to ensure that the knife edge makes contact with the entire door gasket;

Ensure that all dogs or closing assemblies move freely and close securely. Routinely lubricate all watertight door fittings and hinges to ensure fluid operation; and

Ensure that vessel masters provide regular training on watertight door operation and maintenance to their crews. Watertight doors should be closed at all times while a vessel is underway except when transiting from space to space.

Please access <http://marineinvestigations.us> Safety Alerts > General Operations > "Securing Watertight Doors" and "Maintaining Vessel Watertight Integrity" for additional related information.

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