



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Marine Safety Detachment New Bedford

March 31, 2021
New Bedford, MA

Findings of Concern 004 - 21

UNSAFE CONDITIONS WHILE WORKING ON COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that identified as causal factors in marine casualties and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. On January 21, 2020, at approximately 0405, off the coast of Nantucket, MA, a deckhand was disconnecting the water supply hose from the clam-dredging unit, at a height of approximately 30 feet above the main deck, when he fell into the water. The vessel crew had difficulty locating the overboard deckhand due to extreme darkness. The deckhand was subsequently recovered after 40 minutes in the water, but was unresponsive and later determined to have drowned. At the time of the incident, the deckhand was wearing a Coast Guard approved Type III personal flotation device (PFD); however, it was not equipped with a PFD light.



Figure 1: Type III Personal flotation device (PFD) worn by deckhand during incident without securely attached light.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The U.S. Coast Guard determined the cause for the deckhand entering the water, was the lack of fall arrest gear utilized while working aloft. Additionally, the vessel's company did not have a policy regarding the use of fall arrest gear while working aloft. The investigation also revealed that the deckhand's PFD did not have a light securely attached, as required by 46 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 25.25-13(b).



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Figure 2: Standard clam dredging unit on a commercial fishing vessel

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures that all commercial fishing vessel crewmembers and operators should consider to mitigate risk associated with the above-identified factors:

- Owners/operators of commercial fishing vessels should evaluate operations conducted on board their vessels to determine the need to establish safety policies/procedures for crewmembers working aloft including the addition of fall arrest gear to secure crewmembers to the vessel and the posting of lookouts for crewmembers who are working aloft.
- Confirm each PFD on board has a PFD light securely attached in accordance with 46 CFR Part 25.25-13(b).

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Marine Safety Detachment New Bedford by phone at (508) 999-0072 or by email at MSDNewBedford@uscg.mil.