



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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Clarification on Survival Craft Requirements for Uninspected Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels

On February 8, 2016, the President signed the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015* (H.R. Bill 4188) into law. In it, section 301 amended the out-of-water survival craft requirements in Title 46 United States Code (U.S.C.) §3104 by limiting its applicability to inspected vessels. The Coast Guard issued Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) # 02-16 on February 17, 2016 notifying the public of the changes made by the 2015 CGAA regarding survival craft and cancelling CVC Policy Letter 15-05, dated December 18, 2015.

Section 301 of the 2015 Coast Guard Authorization Act (CGAA) removed the language in 46 U.S.C. §3104 that prevented the Coast Guard from approving in-water survival craft (e.g., life floats and rigid buoyant apparatus) for all vessels that fall under Title 46 U.S.C. Part B, which includes uninspected commercial fishing vessels. Therefore, in-water survival craft approvals may resume and commercial fishing vessels may continue to use their existing in-water survival craft as specified in 46 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 28. However, the Coast Guard highly recommends that owners and operators transition to out-of-water survival craft for the safety of their personnel.

Also, please recognize that if you are currently required to carry an out-of-water survival craft on your commercial fishing vessel in accordance with statute or regulation (see 46 CFR Part 28), that requirement remains in effect. In other words, the current regulatory survival craft requirements for commercial fishing vessels are unchanged until amended or revised by future legislation or rulemaking.

Lastly, pursuant to 46 U.S.C. §4502(b)(2)(B), the Coast Guard is required to prescribe regulations requiring commercial fishing vessels that operate beyond 3 NM from the baseline to carry out-of-water survival craft in an aggregate capacity to accommodate the total number of individuals on board. A rulemaking project to implement 46 U.S.C. §4502(b)(2) is currently underway.

Questions concerning survival craft requirements on commercial fishing vessels may be directed to the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance (CG-CVC), Fishing Vessels Division, at 202-372-1249, or by email as noted in the header. Questions concerning survival craft type approvals should be directed to the Office of Design and Engineering Standards, (CG-ENG) at TypeApproval@uscg.mil.

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