

Safe Housekeeping and Sanitation Practices

Workers in commercial fishing face hazardous working conditions on a daily basis that can lead to injuries and fatalities. The most common hazards are associated with unsafe work practices and working around moving deck machinery, rigging, or equipment, while other hazards are caused by harsh weather conditions. Over half of the recordable injuries in commercial fishing are preventable through good housekeeping and sanitary practices.

To protect workers on commercial fishing vessels, employers must identify the hazards and take steps to address them. For example, improperly storing tools and fishing gear, or allowing water or fish parts to accumulate from processing activities increase the risk for slips, trips, and falls. The poor storage and ineffective labeling of chemicals, cleaning solvents as well as poor maintenance of machinery and equipment can result in worker exposure to harmful substances. Also, workers can be injured or killed when they are struck by equipment, materials, and cargo that are stacked at unsafe heights.

Authority over working conditions on uninspected commercial fishing vessels is shared by OSHA and the U.S. Coast Guard, with the U.S. Coast Guard being the lead agency. This fact sheet summarizes work practices and safety measures for effective housekeeping and sanitation in commercial fishing operations. For information on OSHA's jurisdiction of commercial fishing, see [CPL 02-01-047, OSHA Authority Over Vessels and Facilities on or Adjacent to U.S. Navigable Waters and the Outer Continental Shelf \(OCS\)](#).



Good Housekeeping and Sanitary Practices to Prevent Worker Injuries

- **Start by cleaning up:** Begin with a thorough housecleaning. Remove all trash, accumulations of scrap, and unused materials.
- **Make housekeeping an ongoing priority:** Ensure workers understand that housekeeping is a priority and that each person is accountable for making sure that their work area remains clean and well-kept.
- **Properly dispose of trash:** Provide appropriate containers for trash and waste. Recyclables, trash, and hazardous waste (e.g., liquids, chemicals, and soaked rags must be stored in approved containers. Trash and waste containers must be emptied frequently to prevent overflow.
- **Keep regular and routine schedules:** Sanitation facilities must be serviced, cleaned, and stocked as needed.

BLS, 2011-2015

Generally, the applicable OSHA standards depend on the work activity taking place. For example, **29 CFR Part 1910**, OSHA's General Industry standard, applies to vessels engaged in fishing or fish processing activities. When the vessel or its machinery undergoes servicing, the provisions in **29 CFR Part 1915**, OSHA's Shipyard Employment standard, must be followed. Also, in some cases, 29 CFR Parts **1917** and **1918** apply when materials handling operations, such as loading, unloading, movement, or other handling of cargo, ship's stores or gear take place.

Walking and Working Surfaces

- Keep surfaces clean and free of debris, protruding objects, holes or loose boards, and tools.
- Make sure equipment, materials, and cargo are stowed at safe heights to allow for easy reach and prevent objects from falling on workers or causing tip or fall hazards.
- Use grates or other temporary flooring where standing water is unavoidable.
- Eliminate slippery conditions, such as snow and ice, on all outdoor walking and working areas, or designate safe areas for workers. Where this is not possible, employers must provide workers with slip-resistant footwear.
- Properly stow or position hoses and electrical cords to prevent trip hazards and damage to the hoses and cords.
- Keep heavy traffic work areas and access to vessels, cranes, vehicles, and buildings unobstructed.

Restrooms and Sanitation

- Routinely inspect areas for signs of rodents, insects, or other vermin, and implement a control program when necessary.
- Have an adequate number of toilet facilities available close to work locations with a means for handwashing at or adjacent to each.
- Develop a schedule for regular servicing, cleaning, and stocking of restrooms and handwashing facilities. It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of set frequencies and make adjustments as needed.
- Ensure that trash bins in eating, drinking, and break areas are emptied daily.
- Ensure an adequate supply of potable water is available for drinking, worker health and personal needs, cooking, and food preparation. All potable and non-potable water supplies must be labeled for their designated uses.

- Provide changing rooms where the work activity requires using protective clothing with privacy, and separate storage for street and protective clothing.

Movement of Cargo, Ship's Stores or Gear

- During offloading, ensure that dunnage, hatch beams, tarpaulins and gear are stored at least three feet from weather deck hatch coamings.

Entrance and Exit Routes

- Maintain sufficient lighting for exit routes, gangways, stairs, and walkways.
- Provide workers with a flashlight or other portable light where permanent lighting is not available.
- Keep workers from entering dark holds, compartments, decks, or other spaces without a flashlight or other portable light.
- Make sure exits and fire equipment are appropriately marked and easily accessible.



Photos by: Amy Duz — iWorkWise

Evaluation of Atmospheric Conditions

- Perform the appropriate atmospheric testing of confined and enclosed spaces, such as fish holds, tanks, or cargo compartments, to ensure safe entry.
- Frequently check on workers working alone in tanks or cargo compartments to ensure their safety.
- Dispose of flammable and combustible substances, such as paint thinners, solvents, rags, scrap, and waste, or store them in covered fire-resistant containers.

Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace.
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.
- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with

their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

For additional information, see [OSHA's Workers page](#).

How to Contact OSHA

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.



U.S. Department of Labor



**Occupational
Safety and Health
Administration**

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: 1-877-889-5627.

