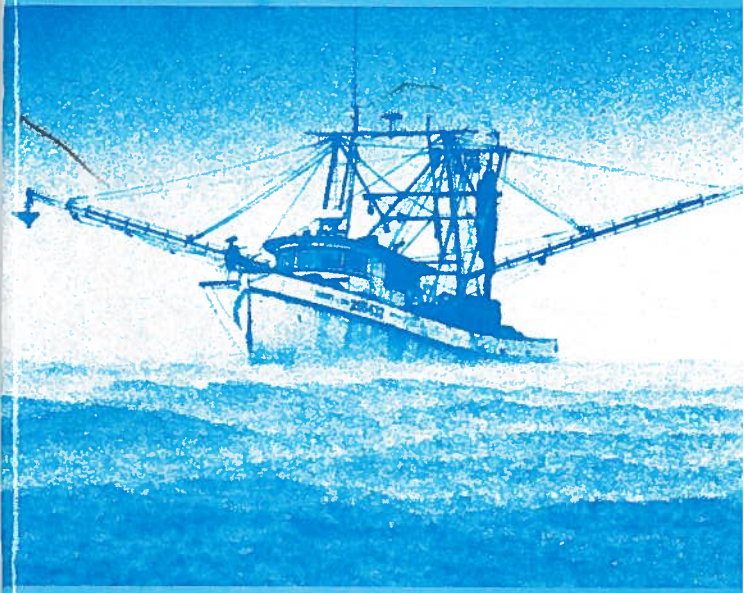
Gulf Coast Fishing Vessel

Crewman's Handbook



National Council of Fishing Vessel Safety and Insurance
Texas A&M University Sea Grant College Program

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Crewman's Handbook

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Introduction

It is the duty of every crew member to become familiar with basic procedures and systems that affect his safety, the safety of the other crewmen and the safety of the vessel. He should follow the vessel's safety rules at all times, and promptly report injuries, accidents or defects to the captain. Accidents generally happen when someone fails to take appropriate action in dangerous circumstances. Good seamanship is common-sense awareness and thinking ahead, which means preparation and forethought are crucial.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a general orientation to Gulf of Mexico fishing vessels and their operation. It is each crewman's duty to ask as many questions as possible about basic safety and vessel operations before he leaves the dock. The more each crewman knows about safety and seamanship, the better the odds that the vessel will be a success story rather than a casualty statistic.

Orientation

New crewmen should be given a thorough orientation—particularly in the areas of safety and specific duties and responsibilities.

Topics to be covered in an orientation include:

- Where and how to join the vessel.
- How long the fishing trip will last and the kind of working conditions to expect.
- Sleeping and eating arrangements.
- Necessary clothing, shoes to wear and additional equipment required.
- How to get along with other crew members, and the chain of command to follow.
- Safety precautions to follow.
- Specific duties and responsibilities.

- When and how you will be paid and what your crew share will be.
- Where your mail should be forwarded. How your family or friends can contact you in an emergency.
- Emergency procedures to follow and emergency communications.
- Recognition of possible safety hazards aboard the vessel.
- No illegal drugs or alcohol allowed on vessel.

Your safety orientation should begin with a tour and an explanation about the use of safety equipment aboard. The captain should include a demonstration of the equipment whenever possible. You will be told about the more common safety hazards aboard the vessel; recognition of these may help you avoid an accident. All crew members should be aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid in case something happens to the captain and other crew members. Each new crewman should be briefed on emergency communication procedures and communication equipment.

A new crewman should read all rules and regulations that are important to his safety while he is aboard the vessel. He may be asked to sign a statement saying that he has read and understands these rules and regulations.

You should display a common-sense awareness of safety from the moment you step aboard the vessel.

Personal Gear

Your job as a fisherman demands that you be prepared to endure long, hard hours at sea in whatever weather conditions the vessel encounters. The personal gear you require depends upon where and how your vessel operates. You should ask your captain for a list of everything you need before your departure.

During most of the season in the Gulf of Mexico, the heat and not the cold is the environmental factor with which you must be concerned. Preventing sunburn is much easier than treating it. Unless you are already well-tanned, you will need to protect your skin from the sun's rays. Use sun tanning lotion with appropriate sunscreen until skin is tanned.

During the summer months lighter clothing is worn during daylight hours, but many crewmen prefer long sleeves to short sleeves during night shrimping and fishing operations. Sleeves should be close fitting if any work is done around or near winches or other machinery.

In general, wool or polypropylene clothing is far superior to cotton or other fabrics for keeping you warm and dry. As long as you can stay dry, you can also stay warm. Aboard ship, moisture comes from the outside (spray) and the inside (perspiration).

You need a full suit of foul weather gear that keeps water out even at the seams. Be sure your foul weather gear is a bright, visible color. Being able to see it may be your only chance in a man-overboard situation.

A wool watch cap is good for staying warm in cold conditions, and if your hands or feet get cold, putting on your watch cap will make a remarkable difference. If you have long hair, you should wear a hat or cap, or keep your hair tied up, whenever you operate winches or other moving machinery.

You need heavy white rubber boots that keep your feet cool and dry, provide good traction and protect you from puncturing, tearing or crushing injuries. The boots should be large enought to provide air circulation around your feet, and your sock combination should include wool or polypropylene to minimize the absorption of perspiration. Dry boots are essential to prevention of infection and "saltwater rash" caused by constant exposure of the skin to saltwater. Your boots should be easy to remove in case you wind up overboard.

Especially in trawl fisheries, you may need heavy leather gloves for wire rope work and may want to carry waterproof rubber gloves as well. Because of the problem with catching

gloves in equipment it may be best not to wear gloves when handling lines on catheads during shrimping operations.

You need several sharp folding knives with 3" to 4" blades, and should always have one close at hand when you are at sea. You will be responsible for your own bedding, pillows, towels and hygenic gear, including soap, shampoo, razors, toothbrush and toothpaste, etc.

Your Health

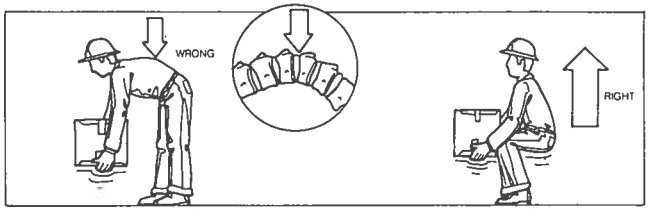
Take good care of yourself. Let the captain know if you're sick or hurt, try to keep yourself clean, warm and dry. Pay special attention to your hands: keep them clean, treat cuts quickly, and use a hand cream or salve. You should have an updated tetanus shot before going to sea.

First aid equipment — Make sure you know where all the first-aid equipment and instructions are and learn how to use it. You have a duty to your crewmates to learn as much first-aid as possible. At sea, fishermen must depend upon one another for emergency medical treatment until professional help is available.

Alcohol and drugs — Don't use them. Alcohol and drug use will result in immediate dismissal. If you are under a doctor's medication, be prepared to furnish the prescription.

The fatigue factor — Fatigue and stress are the enemies of safety. Commercial fishing is not an industry that operates according to fixed schedules, and you may be called upon to work long, difficult hours. Get as much rest as you can, when you can, watch your diet and try to stay warm and dry. The more comfortable you are the less fatigue and stress will affect you.

Know your limits, and be extra careful when you're tired or under stress.



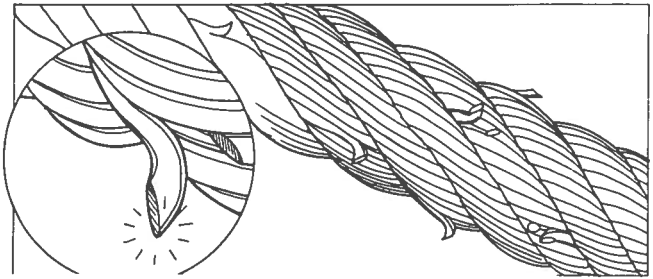
Lift with your legs, not your back.

Lifting/Lifting Equipment Precautions

Learn how to lift. Bend your knees and use your legs, not your back. If something is too heavy for you to pick up by yourself, use mechanical devices or ask for help. Back injuries are common, and they can end your career.

General Lifting Equipment Precautions

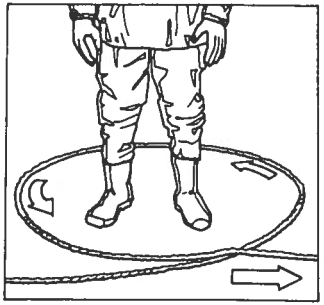
- Fiber lines should be checked for signs of excessive wear, fraying, rot and dryness.
- Equipment must be of sufficient size to accomplish the task and should be inspected regularly.



Wear gloves to protect hands from "fishing hooks," but be careful not to "hang up" gloves in moving cable and gear.

- Wire ropes should be examined for fish hooks, badly worn areas and kinks. Badly worn wire ropes should be replaced.

- Wooden blocks should be inspected for cracked or rotten cheeks or sides, worn pins or cracked or badly worn metal parts.
- Shackles, swivels, metal blocks and hooks should be inspected for cracks, distortion, excessive wear or metal fatigue.
- Heavy weights should never be allowed to drop no matter what the distance. They should be lowered to rest and secured to prevent rolling or sliding.
- All motions with heavy weights should be slow to avoid creating momentum.
- Avoid sudden shocks or strains and beware of side pulls. Side play puts great stress on a boom or crane.
- Avoid dangerous positions: standing under a load, standing in a bight or standing in the line of pull of a taut rope or cable that might give way.



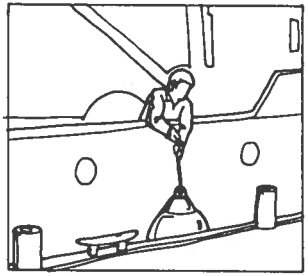
Stay out of the bight of the line.

Boarding and Exiting the Vessel

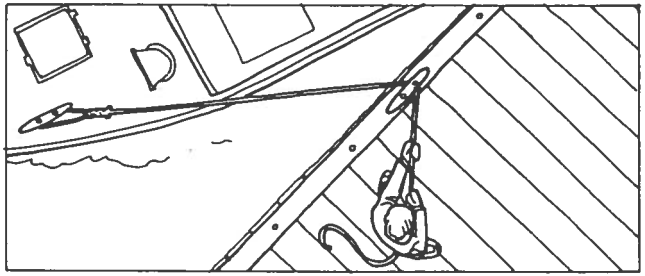
Although it may seem ridiculous to have to say so, be careful getting on and off the boat or passing between boats. Falling and crushing injuries that occur when someone takes a wild leap for the dock or gets pinched between two boats are entirely unnecessary but all too common.

Whenever possible, rig a secure gangplank or ladder that is hooked over the vessel's bulwark.

Don't put your hands or feet in danger when you're fending off; you can't stop the boat anyway, so use a fender. If you're taking a mooring line to the dock, wait until the boat lies close



Use a fender between the vessel and the dock.



Take a turn around a cleat before you try to snub the boat. Hold the line away from the cleat to avoid pinching injuries.

enough to the dock so you can step off safely. Take a turn around a cleat before you try to snub the boat, and hold the line as far back from the cleat as practicable to avoid pinching injuries.

Always stand out of the direct line of pull on the line. If you can't hold a line in check, let it go; don't let the line pull your hand into a cleat or bit.

Keep a lifebuoy and heaving line nearby. Locate the ladder or plank outside of the swinging radius of cranes, booms or blocks.

Don't attempt to board with your hands full. Pass the load across the rail, or hoist it with the boom. Always grab a secure handhold when boarding the vessel.

Moving Around the Vessel

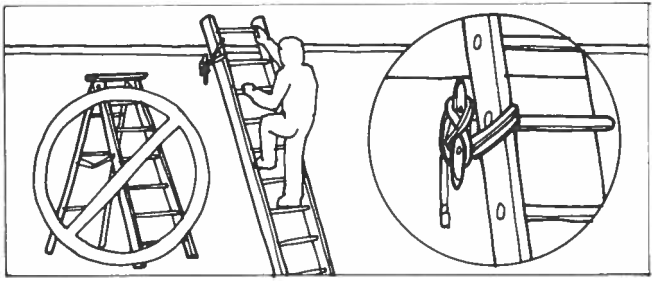
During your first days at sea, you will find that you seem to tire easily. This is because your muscles are unconsciously working against the movement of the vessel. Take care until you get your sea legs. At sea, falling is a constant hazard and a frequent source of injuries. You're going to need a surprising amount of strength just to stand up on a rolling deck, so pay constant attention and remember that your vessel is not a playground. Wearing proper foot gear helps reduce energy required to stand on deck.

If you're going on deck alone at night or in heavy weather, tell someone else that you're going. Take a flashlight if necessary, and wear a PFD (personal flotation device), an approved float coat or life jacket.

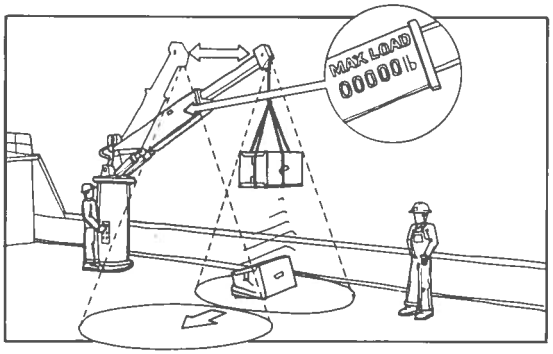
Ladders and Stairs

Always face ladders and stairs in a seaway, and hold on. Don't carry loads; pass or hoist them up. Ladders and stairs should have non-skid treads and be kept free of tripping or slipping hazards.

In general, avoid using portable ladders at sea, if at all possible. If you must, be sure they stand on a firm base and are securely lashed at the top and lashed or held at the bottom. Never take a chance on a ladder that shows obvious defects or is attached by unsafe means.



Avoid portable ladders if possible. Lash them securely.

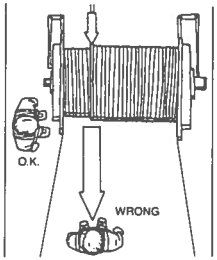


Stay out from under loads and the full radius of its swing.

Stressed Rigging, Suspended Weights

Stand clear of rigging under tension, or weights suspended in the air. Lines and wire ropes can snap like pieces of string, and a hanging weight on a pitching deck becomes a wrecking ball. Standing in the "V" of line under tension on a snatch block can also be dangerous, particularly if the equipment is not well maintained. Always have a hiding place in mind, or a plan for how you will get out of the way if something breaks loose. Try to anticipate what could go wrong.

Don't stand in the direct line of pull in case a line or wire breaks and snaps back and stay out of "bights"



Stay out of the line of pull.

or loops of line or wire. Lower weights to deck as fast as you can, and don't leave heavy objects suspended in the rigging when they aren't in use. Lower the bag of the trawl to deck level as soon as it comes on board to untie the bag. Knot and raise the trawl from the catch, do not drop the catch from the trawl. Don't stand between a hanging weight and the rail or a fixed object against which you could be crushed.

Gangways, Lifelines, Guard Rails, Hand Grabs, Man-Overboard Precautions

Falling into the sea is dangerous. You may not be seen going overboard. You may be sucked under the vessel and through the propeller or get caught in semi-submerged nets and drowned. Falling against machinery or through deck openings can be just as dangerous. The falling hazard is made worse by rolling and pitching decks, by running gear, by wet, slippery conditions, and by fatigue.

Never grab a piece of running rigging. Whenever you're around running gear, keep a safe handhold in mind so you can reach for it automatically if you start to fall.

Don't work alone on deck in dangerous sea conditions unless you have told other crew members and someone is watching you. If you must go on deck in these circumstances, it is advisable to wear a PFD and safety line.

When the weather is rough and dangerous, use extra precautions. Carelessness produces many avoidable man-overboard and falling accidents. If you have to get something that falls overboard, don't lean over the rail. Use a boat hook. Don't use a draw bucket when the vessel is underway. Don't sit or climb on the rail. Don't climb into the rigging unless absolutely necessary and always observe safety procedures.

If someone else falls overboard, sound the alarm, throw him a line or buoy and keep your eye on him until you get further instructions.

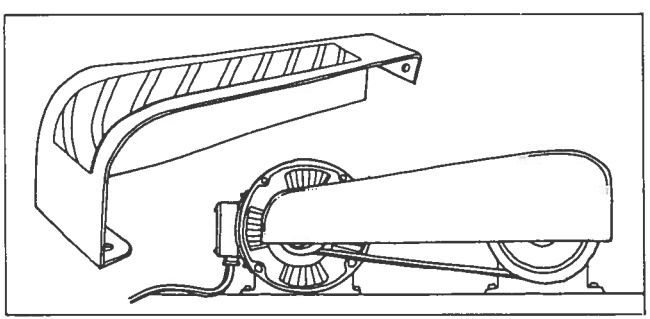
Always wear a PFD (personal flotation device) when working on outriggers or other fishing gear over water or areas where there is a high risk of falling overboard.

General Precautions

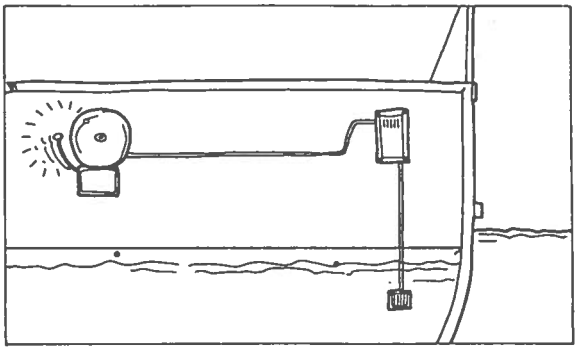
Slick surfaces — Watch where you walk, and keep decks, floors, grates and stairs clean and dry. Don't let lines or gear clutter the deck.

Report leaks and spills right away, make repairs and clean up the mess. Leaks of fuels, oils, hydraulic fluids or other flammable liquids produce both slipping and fire hazards.

Hot surfaces — Learn the locations of exhaust pipes and other hot surfaces, and avoid them. Be aware when you are passing or working around hot surfaces. If insulation or a safety device or machinery guard has to be removed for repairs, it should be replaced as soon as possible and in any case before the machinery or system is put back into operation. Report missing machinery guards to the captain.



Never remove machinery guards without permission.



Bilge alarms should be used to alert the crew to high water in bilge spaces.

Bilge pumps — Although operation of the bilge pumps is normally the job of the captain or rigman and no one else, you should understand how the system works in case you are alone aboard the vessel or are called upon to assist in an emergency.

Passageways — Keep them clear at all times. Don't let gear pile up. If there is a spill in a passageway that creates a slipping hazard, clean it up immediately.

Housekeeping — Good housekeeping in the galley and living areas of your vessel is your constant job. Keep it clean. Dispose of grease and other flammable cooking wastes quickly, and clean up spills. Understand the operation of the galley stove, including all shut-offs in fuel lines, before you use it. Keep pot handles turned inward and use pot holddowns. Be careful with knives and food processing appliances and stow them when you're done. Keep drawers and cabinets shut. Keep floors and countertops clean and dry.

Living areas — Keep them clean. Dispose of wastes properly. Use only approved lights and electrical appliances, and don't overload electrical outlets. Maintain sanitary conditions in the toilet, washing and showering facillities, lockers and other communal spaces. Keep all drains clean and functional and report any problems at once.

Hazards, defects — If you observe a hazard or defect, report it immediately to the captain. All guards provided for the moving parts of winches, hoists and other gear-handling machinery must be in place.

Lines in the water — A tangled line in the propeller can be a very expensive and dangerous mistake, and the lost time will come out of your share. Keep your eye out for lines or wires trailing overboard.

Safety on the Job

Follow the chain of command — If you're a new or inexperienced hand, the captain will let you know what your duties are. Don't try to do a job you're not qualified or authorized to do. When circumstances require you to act other than instructed, you should do so only after further instructions.

If you feel you must act outside of your assigned duties, use your best judgement, and tell the captain at the earliest possible opportunity.

Keep awake — Be alert to what is happening on the boat and to sea conditions. It is easy to be lax or inattentive when you're doing a familiar job , and inattention produces accidents. Keep an eye out for your crewmates as well as yourself, and warn them of threatening waves, approaching vessels or other dangers.

Keep house — Keep all working and living areas neat and orderly. Tools and equipment must be properly stowed or secured. Remove tripping hazards. Get rid of wastes and other debris, and don't let them foul scuppers, drains, freeing ports, etc.

Leaks and spills should be reported and cleaned immediately. Bilges and engine room surfaces should be kept clean. Fishing and trawling gear and other cargo has to be properly

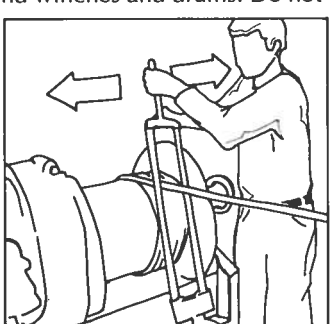
secured. Passageways must be kept clear. Lines and ropes must be coiled and stowed. Clothing, foul weather gear, boots, etc., must be kept in their proper places.

Hand tools — Use the right hand tools for the job, keep them clean and stow them when you're done. Keep cutting tools sharp and make use of all hilt or finger guards to keep your hand from sliding into the blade. Open-bladed knives, gaffs, hooks and other sharp or pointed objects should be sheathed or safely stowed when not in use. Don't use a tool that is obviously defective or not the right tool for the job. Tools or other gear should be removed before restarting a machine that has been serviced.

Winches, Tackle and Lifting Gear

Operation of winches, tackle, lifting gear and other types of moving machinery is the job of experienced crewmen, especially in rough conditions. New hands should practice under supervision and in calm conditions, and be certified as competent by the captain before using such equipment on their own.

Mashed hands, arms or feet are common injuries where wire or line runs over blocks or around winches and drums. Do not attempt to use your hands, feet or hips to guide wire on a winch drum, or to free a fouled wire. Always use a cable guide and watch for shackles and bridles which can catch the guide and move it unexpectedly.



Cable guides keep hands, arms, legs and feet out of winches.

Be sure there is someone at the controls whenever you work around running gear. Stand clear of running rigging so the motion of the boat doesn't throw you on the wire or line, and don't grab the running gear if you must clutch for support. Don't stand in the direct line of pull of a wire or line under tension in case it parts and snaps back. Always leave at least a layer of wire on a winch drum to "lock" it in place.

Lifting and hoisting gear must always be used within safe working load ranges. Stand well clear of a load in the air, especially when the boat is rolling. Never stand between the load and the rail or a fixed object against which you could be crushed. Remember that rocks or other debris may fall out of the cod end.

If you are operating a winch or hoist, be sure everyone is clear of the danger zone before applying a load, and never leave the equipment unattended when it is running or when there is a load in the air. Make sure snatch blocks are closed and properly latched when used. Never pass a suspended load over another crewman. Be sure the area around the controls is unimpeded, and that your view is as unobstructed as possible. Before each operation, test the control handles to make sure they return automatically to the neutral or stopped position.

When using a "cathead" to lift anchors or rigging never use frayed whip lines which can overlap and continue wrapping. If this occurs, shut off the winch to take the strain off the whip and untangle the line off the cathead. Never use two catheads for one line because you have no control for slippage when slacking the line.

Fishing Operations

Mobile gear fisheries like purse seining and trawling are extremely dangerous because of the heavy gear that must be handled under a variety of sea conditions. Becoming a skilled deckman able to operate complex fishing systems safely is something that can only be attained through years of hands-on practice. Even as a green hand, however, there are basic safety measures you must observe, and what follows is merely an introductory list:

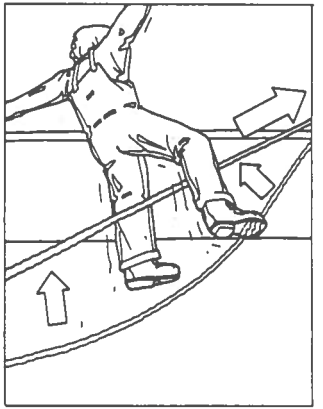
Stand clear of outrunning gear. Don't stand on nets or gear when part remains in the water. Take special care in clearing fouled gear, and don't use your hands to try and clear a line from a fouling point.

Be alert to unexpected strains that may occur when the gear is fouled on the bottom, and remember that fouling can occur until all of the gear is aboard. If fouled gear suddenly comes free, for example, lines or wire may snap or sweep sideways, or bounce violently up and down.

Learn the signals used aboard your vessel for communicating between the deck and bridge.

Beware of the dangers posed by certain fish or other objects that may come up in a net. Wounds from fish spines should be treated immediately to prevent blood poisoning.

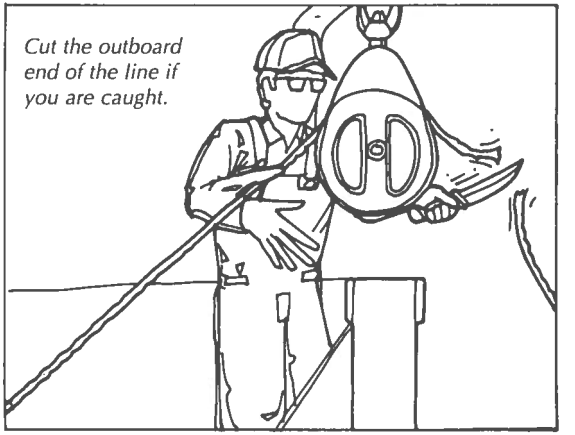
Working with extremely heavy objects like trawl doors and large nets is dangerous and requires skill and attention. Don't attempt to work doors and nets before you have been given specific instructions on how to proceed.



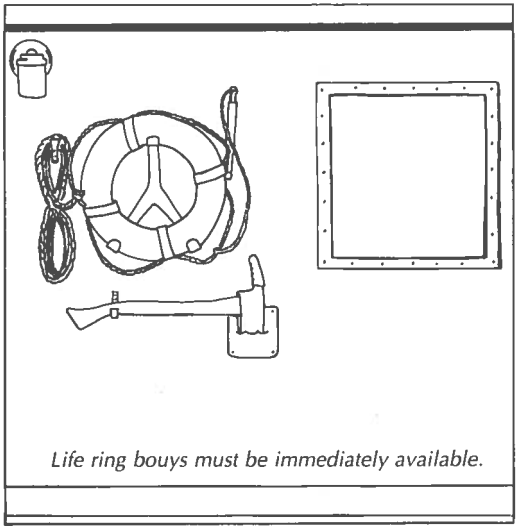
Beware of lines under tension.

If your clothing becomes caught in the gear, cut it free immediately. If you have to cut a line, be sure to cut the outboard end or you'll go down anyway.

Ring buoys — Additionally, owners are advised to place ring buoys at the working deck level as well as on the sides of the wheelhouse. Depending on the size of the vessel, two or more ring buoys should be located inside the bulwarks on either side of the working deck. At least one ring buoy on either side shold be outfitted with a heaving line and rescue light.



Cut the outboard end of the line if you are caught.



Life ring bouys must be immediately available.

Trawling

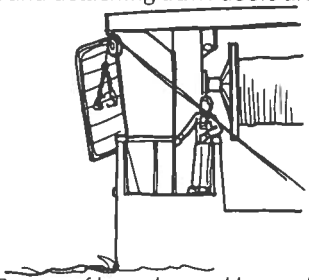
Trawl Wire — Don't try to guide trawl wire or other types of running wire with your hands, feet or hips. The amount of force you can apply won't have any effect on wire under thousands of pounds of load, but you could be seriously hurt. If your boat is equipped with a cable guide, use it, and make sure of your footing. If you fall onto running wire, you could be carried onto the winch. Be aware of bridles, shackles and fittings that can catch the guide and create sudden movement.

Working wires and lines should be kept as clear as possible from men working on deck. Never sit or lean on the trawl cables when the net is being towed. Don't stand on line, wire or netting while any part remains in the water.

Never work on operating machinery. It must be stopped and rendered incapable of accidental restarting. When repairs are underway, controls should be tagged to alert other crewmen that the equipment is not to be restarted until the work has been completed.

Trawl Doors — Trawl doors are extremely dangerous. Take care to avoid crushing injuries when working with trawl doors at the stanchions. Remember that a trawl door storage rack can either serve to protect you or act as an anvil against which you could be crushed. Hauling back and detaching trawl doors are dangerous operations because of the extreme weight of the doors, and because the man at the rack and the man at the controls must coordinate their actions.

Trawl blocks should be set at the correct height above the deck. Incorrect height will allow trawl doors to swing inboard and endanger the crew under heavy sea conditions.

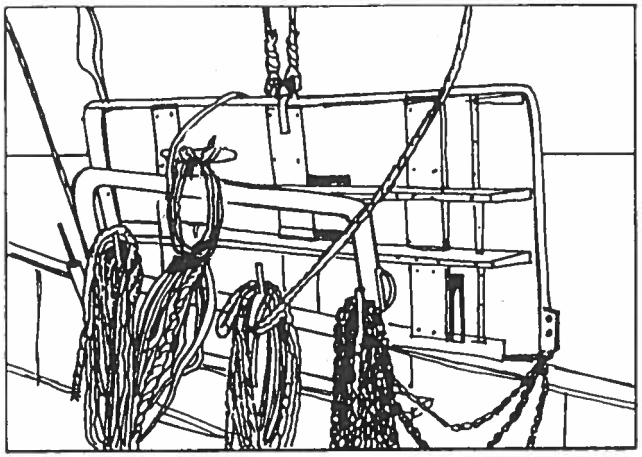


Beware of hazards posed by trawl doors.

Crewmen should wait until the doors have been completely hauled back before moving to the trawl racks, because shock loads on the trawl gear can cause the doors to bounce inside of the rail. Doors should be rigged with safety chains that prevent them from swinging inboard and should never be left hanging only from the trawl warps when the vessel is underway. Similarly, safety chains from above should support the doors in case an eye wears out and a trawl block fails.

Trawl doors supported by mechanical means at the racks should also be supported by the winch, by keeping the main trawl cables under tension. Use of a chain and cable tension provides extra security against accidentally dropping the doors.

Since trawl doors are bulky, hard to handle and heavy, they should be carefully handled particularly during rough weather and sea conditions. The doors should be stored in their own storage racks and secured properly when not in use in a trawl. Maintenance and repair should be done while they are being stowed.

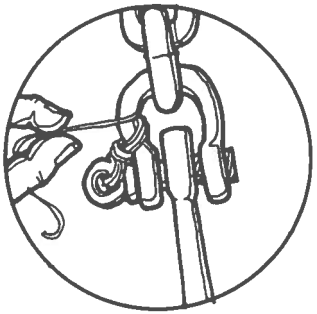


Trawl doors should be properly secured on racks.

Deck Machinery

Moving parts of winches and of warp and chain leads that may present a hazard should have adequate guards. Repairs to winches, tackle and lifting gear should be to original standards of construction.

Protection should be provided around winch foundations to prevent a person from being caught or dragged under. Sheaves should be guarded where practicable. Blocks and sheaves should be properly lubricated at regular intervals. All shackles used aloft should be a locking type, or should be "moused" (secured so they cannot come loose accidentally).



Mousing a shackle.

Handholds, rails or guards should be placed around winches and drums where practicable. Gear stowed on deck should never be allowed to obstruct the working area around winches and drums.

When the gear is running, there should normally be at least two men on deck. Winch operators should not leave winches unattended with gear running, or with a load suspended.

If a winch has local and remote controls, they should be arranged to prevent simultaneous operation. The operator should have a clear view of the winch and adjacent working areas.

Winches should have a means of stopping and holding the safe working load. Brakes should be proof-tested with a dead load in excess of the maximum safe working load. Brakes should be easy to adjust. Every winch drum that can be uncoupled from the drive should have a separate brake.

Experienced hands should normally operate winches and other deck machinery, especially in bad weather.

The winch operator is directly responsible for the safety of gear-handling operations. If he has any doubt about safety, he should stop the winch immediately and refuse to proceed until safety has been assured. He must be competent in all phases of winch operation and know the safe working loads of his equipment.

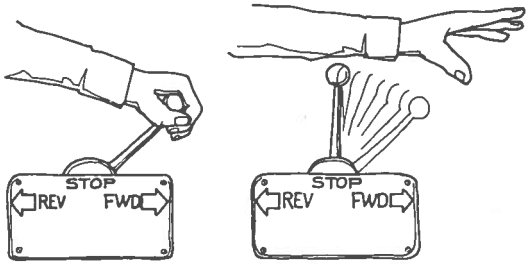
If you get overwinds or bad wraps on the winch drum, clear the drum immediately. Never operate a winch with less than 1 1/2 layers of wire on the drum. The upper half-layer locks the wire and keeps it from unreeling. If you are operating a winch with a cathead, do not lay on too many turns or you may get an overlap. If the line shows any tendency to overlap, remove a turn.

Maintenance

It is the responsibility of the captain and crew to inspect and maintain the fishing gear constantly.

Never attempt to clean, oil or adjust a winch while it is operating. When repairs are undertaken, the winch should be rendered inoperable by disconnecting the valve or some other means. If you remove a guard or safety device during maintenance or repair work, it should be replaced prior to operation.

Control levers on winches and other hydraulic equipment



Hydraulic winch controls should snap back to neutral when hand pressure is removed.

should always be well lubricated and should snap back automatically to stop the gear the moment hand pressure is removed.

Periodically check brake bands on winch to be sure the pin holding ends of the bands are in good condition as well as the bands themselves.

Emergency Procedures

Duty stations — You must be aware of your responsibilities in the event of a crisis such as man-overboard, abandonment, personnel injury, fire, grounding, collision or loss of power. You must become familiar with all safety instructions prepared for your vessel. You should also be aware of all exit points in the event of an emergency.

Radio procedures — Each crewman must know how to make a distress call and use emergency radio procedures. Make sure you know the location of instructions for these procedures.

Behavior in the event of emergency — You should be able to swim, and you must remain calm and helpful in the event of an emergency. When an emergency arises at sea, each crewman has to respond quickly and correctly if lives and property are to be saved. Often, seconds spell the difference betwen a disaster and a near miss, and "there is no substitute for forethought, experience, quick action and good judgment." It is your responsibility to become familiar with the vessel's safety plan and to participate in all drills or training sessions that may be conducted.

Life-saving appliances — Each crewman must know the following:

- Location and use of personal flotation devices (PFDs).
- Locations and deployment of liferaft or lifefloat.
- Location and use of lifebuoys, including tethering lines and strobe lights.
- Locations and use of distress rockets/signaling devices.
- Location and use of EPIRB (emergency position-indicating radio beacon).

The vessel's maintenance plan should include regular inspection and proper stowage of general safety equipment. You are responsible for the inspection and proper stowage of your personal survival gear.

Distress Radio Procedures

In the event of an emergency, it is extremely important to establish radio communications immediately with the Coast Guard or another vessel, using VHF-FM or single sideband (SSB) equipment. Do not wait until the situation is out of control. At that point, there may be no power to the radio, or it may be too late for rescue units to respond.

Radio telephone (voice) distress messages — The use of proper format is essential in the transmission of distress messages. The urgency of the situation requires that distress messages be as brief and clear as possible, while still containing all necessary information. All crewmen must understand distress message format and transmission procedures.

If you are in distress (threatened by grave and imminent danger) transmit the International Distress Call on either 2182 KHZ or 156.8 MHZ (channel 16 VHF-FM). Use the following format:

Speak slowly and clearly and give the following information.

- MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, THIS IS (your vessel name and call sign repeated three times.)
- Describe the nature of the emergency.
- Give your position in latitude and longitude, loran coordinates, or reference to a known geographical position and depth of water. Says a Coast Guard veteran, "Give us everything you've got" that pertains to your location.

Once two-way communications are established with another station, additional information may be passed.

- Description of vessel—length, colors, construction, type.
- Number of people aboard.
- Radio frequencies onboard.
- Lifesaving and survival equipment carried.
- On-scene weather.
- What assistance is requested from the Coast Guard.
- If you have an EPIRB, that it will be activated if no reply is heard.
- Present seaworthiness of your vessel.
- Homeport, owner's name and telephone number.
- Official number of vessel.
- Cargo aboard.

If it is a medical emergency, give:

- Name and call numbers of your vessel.
- Your position.
- Victim's name and age.
- Nature and complete description of the problem.
- Relay the victim's vital signs if you are able.

Fire

Aboard fishing vessels, because of limited equipment and training, fighting a fire is extremely dangerous. That makes fire prevention everybody's job. An understanding of the basic principles of fire control is another key to safe operation. If a fire occurs, it first has to be isolated, then put out.

Keep house — Make sure the boat is clean. Mop up spills of flammable liquids and report leaks. Empty engine room drip trays. Keep fuel and hydraulic fittings tight. Keep the galley clean and dispose of grease and other flammable wastes. Dispose of paper and other combustibles in metal containers. Follow proper procedures for storing packaging materials and keep work areas and passage ways free of obstructions. Dispose of engine room rags in self-closing metal containers. Keep flammable or combustible materials away from electrical installations. A dirty boat is a fire trap.

Smoking — Don't smoke in bed. Dispose of cigarettes and ashes properly, in sand buckets or metal ashtrays. Observe all posted no-smoking warnings.

Observe no-smoking warnings.

Use of open-flame appliances — Know the proper operation of galley stoves, torches, welding equipment, etc. Such appliances should be used only in well-ventilated areas. Follow proper procedures for using fuel shut-off valves and ventilators that remove fumes.

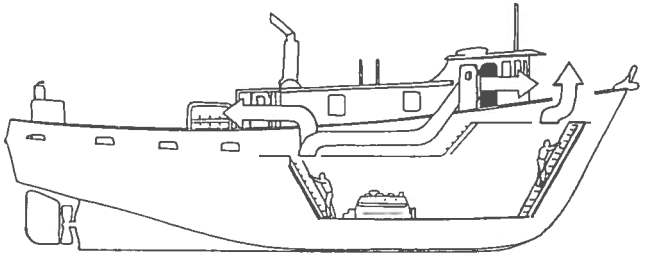
Proper stowage of gas cylindrers and flammable materials — Cylinders containing flammable or other dangerous gases should be stowed only on open decks. All valves, pressure regulators and pipes leading from the cylinders should always be firmly secured and should be protected against excessive heat or cold, excessive sunlight and continuous dampness.

Turn off gas installations at the cylinder when the installations are not in use. Compressed oxygen should never be used in place of compressed air for starting engines or machinery.

Store paints, solvents and other flammable liquids only in well-ventilated stowage areas. Don't smoke or introduce non-essential electrial equipment into these spaces, which may contain combustible fumes.

Escape routes-Be aware of all potential escape routes from living and working areas and practice getting out in the dark.

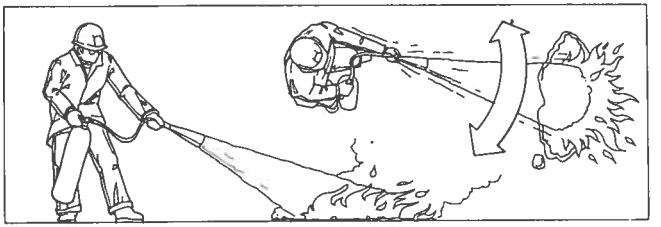
Know your responsibilites in case of fire — Your first duty is to raise the alarm. If the fire occurs in living quarters, make sure



Each crewman should know escape routes in case of emergency.

that everyone gets out. Try to put out a small fire with portable extinguishers or other means at hand. If the fire is too large to control quickly, isolate the compartment completely — close hatches, doors, portholes, vents and turn off electrical current and fuel supplies to the area. Don't reopen sealed compartments until the captain tells you.

Fire-fighting appliances — You must be familiar with the locations and use of the vessel's fire-fighting appliances, including portable fire extinguishers, water hoses and pumps, breathing equipment, etc. Keep all extinguishers free and clear. never use them as coat racks.



Aim at the base of the fire and sweep the flames away.

Confined-Space Safety Procedures

The term *confined spaces* refers to any space that has limited openings for entry and exit, and poor natural ventilation. Such spaces may lack sufficient oxygen to support life, or may contain dangerous air contaminants. Examples of confined spaces are cargo holds, tanks, cofferdams, double bottoms, fish holds and lazarettes.

- Don't enter a confined space without telling the captain. Use the buddy system if you suspect a hazard, and have a safety line and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) at the ready.
- Fish holds should be cleaned as soon as possible after off-loading. Use clean seawater. Do not use water known to contain a large percentage of sewage or waste.
- Equipment that could create heat or sparks and pose an explosive hazard in a confined space should be shut off at the electrical power supply whenever an explosive hazard exists.
- Internal combustion engines should only be used in a confined space when there is adequate ventilation.
- Exhaust piping should be inspected regularly for leaks.
- Ventilate spaces using blowers or other methods of forced ventilation. Blowers should be explosion-proof.
- Test the space for oxygen content and the presence of combustible or toxic gases.
- Continue to apply forced ventilation while personnel are in the confined space.
- If you must enter a space that has not been ventilated and tested, wear a SCBA and safety line. Make sure someone else is stationed outside the space in case you must be rescued.

Sodium Bisulfite — Shrimp are often treated with sodium bisulfite, commonly called dip, prior to storage on board the

vessel in order to prevent the formation of blackspot.

Dip should always be made up and used on the deck, never in the hold. Even more dangerous is the practice of sprinkling dry powder on shrimp stored in the hold. This can result in the production of toxic gases, thereby endangering the crew. Always use bisulfite as a dip at the recommended levels of 1.25% solution for ice boats and 0.75% solution for freezer boats which incorporate the chemical into the brine.

Gulf Coast Fishing Vessel Basic Crewman's Safety Tips

- No alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs. If you are taking prescribed medications, inform the captain and show him the prescription.
- Never smoke in your bunk, in any confined area or while fueling at oil docks.
- Take your time as you move about the vessel. Always use handrails.
- Never run up or down steps and never run on deck.
- Always wear life vests or life jackets during rough seas.
- Learn how to lift, load and unload cargo. Bend your knees, not your back.
- Never stand under stressed rigging. Do not walk on or straddle rope. Never stand in the loop of a line.
- When tying up, always place your hands over the line but never beneath the line. Keep fingers from in-between lines and solid objects.
- Make certain adequate slack is present in anchor line before making wrap on anchor cleat.
- Always face the ladder when climbing up or down. Keep stairs and ladders clear of trippng hazards.
- Know the location of all fire extinguishers and how to operate them.
- Never walk barefoot aboard the vessel; always wear appropriate boots or deck shoes.
- Become familiar with emergency procedures and all alarms and whistles.
- Do not lean over edge of vessel to grab a line. Use a boat hook.
- Beware at all times of slick decks, open hatches, loose or swinging rigging, and loose lines or gear on deck.
- Keep all watertight doors and hatches closed when underway and in open waters.
- Do not obstruct passageways with gear or cargo.
- Learn the location of the vessel's first-aid kit and use it when needed. Report all injuries, scratches, cuts, burns, sprains, etc., to the captain at once, no matter how minor.
- Do not remove guardrails or other safety guards from around winch, power take-off and chain or belt-driven equipment.
- Do not jump from vessel to dock before vessel has come to a complete stop.
- Use hand tools properly and keep tools clean.
- Ground all portable electric tools.
- Do not discharge oil or oily waste into water.
- When repairing, checking, oiling, cleaning or adjusting equipment, be sure equipment is turned off and that the switch will not be turned on by other crew members.
- Avoid loose clothing and loose-fitting rain gear near winches and chain-belt- or gear-driven equipment.
- In the galley be careful with knives, keep pot handles turned away from front of stove, keep cabinet doors and drawers closed, and clean up all spills immediately.
- When pulling in the net, look out for catfish, hardheads, stringrays, sharks, jellyfish and other marine organsisms that may cause injury.
- When fishing at night be sure to have proper light array.

When fishing in daylight hours, display proper day shapes. Have the wheel manned at all times.

- Do not use hands or feet directly on towing wire to guide cable on winch drums.
- On vessels with sliding pelican hooks, take care not to be underneath when lowering.
- Do not swim off the boat.
- If defective or damaged equipment is noted, notify the captain immediately.
- Always keep holds clear of trash and greasy rags, and wipe up all oil or fuel spills.
- Do not go into the fish or shrimp hold until proper ventilation is assured and no dangerous or poisonous gases are present. Do not go into the hold without notifying a fellow crew member.

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