Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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Coast Guard Northeast District
Inspections and Compliance
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Commercial Fishing Vessel Stability and Icing

The purpose of this Bulletin is to highlight critical safety risks, regulatory compliance mandates, regarding Commercial Fishing Vessel (CFV) Stability and Ice Accretion (Icing). Recent dockside exams and boardings within the Northeast Coast Guard District have revealed systemic non-compliance with stability standards. This non-compliance is especially prevalent among vessels originating from southern ports that transit north of 42°00' N Latitude during winter months, as well as vessels that have undergone undocumented modifications.

Federal law (46 CFR Part 28 / 46 U.S.C. § 4503, 5102) mandates formal stability instructions for commercial fishing vessels built or substantially modified after September 1991, yet widespread non-compliance persists due to missing documentation or unrecorded vessel alterations.

To address these safety hazards, owners and operators must actively verify whether a vessel is required to maintain a stability booklet and icing plan if operates north of 42°00' N Latitude. Additionally, owners and operators must ensure that any changes to the vessel over the last 35 years that included, added bulwarks, modified gantries, altered outriggers, heavy gear additions, or changes in fishery types (e.g., a pot boat converted to a trawler) have been incorporated into the current stability book.

Commercial fishermen can complete Coast Guard-accepted vessel stability training through scheduled regional workshops or online courses offered directly by Fishing Partnership Support Services (FPSS) and the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA). To review exam requirements, schedule a safety exam with your local Coast Guard office or an accepted third-party marine surveyor, or learn more about compliance options, visit www.fishsafewest.info.

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Please ensure your vessel always maintains a valid safety decal/exam. If you have any questions, contact one of the Coast Guard Sector Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examiners indicated above.

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