

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commander, Eleventh District

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Dear California Association of Harbormasters and Port Captains:

Commercial fishing continues to be the most dangerous occupation in America. In 1988, Congress passed the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act to help prevent vessel loss and crew fatalities with America's fleet. Compliance of these federal regulations is mandatory and enforced at-sea by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The law also provided for free dockside examinations of commercial fishing vessels by specially-trained Coast Guard examiners, with no penalty for any discrepancy found. A successful dockside exam results in a safety decal displayed onboard and valid for two years. The dockside program allows a voluntary, non-punitive way for fishermen to come into compliance with federal regulations and increase safety-awareness.

Statistics collected over the last ten years show that commercial fishing vessels in California with a current dockside exam are 98% less likely to sink or burn at the dock or be involved in a pollution incident. At sea, they are 92% less likely to sink, run aground, capsize, lose someone overboard or have a fatality. Additionally, fishermen who engage with the dockside program tend to conduct more preventative maintenance on their vessels (resulting in less missed fishing opportunities due to equipment failure), train their crewmembers in safety and are more prepared for emergencies.

Recently, a new law has been approved by Congress and awaits the President's signature which will make voluntary dockside examinations mandatory for all commercial fishing vessels, and includes other provisions for improved commercial fishing vessel safety.

My team and I are at your service to answer any questions you may have regarding commercial fishing vessel safety and applicable federal laws for your harbor or port. We welcome the opportunity to serve you and your fishing community. Please feel free to contact me or your local CFVS dockside examiner with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Murphy
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Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Specialist
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