



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector Northern New England

April 30, 2019
Portland, ME

Findings of Concern 007 - 19

Lack of Anti-Entanglement Devices & Engine Cut-off Switches on Lobster Boats

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. On May 18, 2018, the operator of a commercial lobster boat was the sole person aboard, lobstering near Jericho Bay, Maine. While doing so, the operator's foot became ensnared in a running lobster trap trawl line and the operator was dragged over the stern of the vessel. The operator became further entangled and was unable to grab hold of a rope ladder attached to the stern. The vessel continued to transit at a rate of speed between five and seven knots before grounding on a rock ledge. The operator perished as a result of his injuries.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The investigation identified the lack of anti-entanglement devices and lobster trap securing devices as conditions contributing to the incident. On lobster boats without an open stern, lobstermen will ready and deploy traps by placing them on the top of the gunwale. Without a trap-securing device, the potential exists that an unsupervised trap could inadvertently deploy. When lobstering without the use of anti-entanglement devices, lobster trap trawl line can quickly accumulate on deck. These facts, when combined, can lead to an elevated risk of entanglement and result in a fall overboard. Additionally, without a sternman or implementation of an engine cut-off switch, the operator was unable to secure the engine and re-board the vessel.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Use of anti-entanglement measures such as fairleads, line bins, and line lockers, would reduce the risk of entanglement by keeping the deck free of loose lines.
- Use of trap-securing devices to prevent inadvertent deployment of gear.
- Installation of an engine cut-off switch or gagline to provide an expedient means to secure the engine in the event of a fall overboard.
- Use of a sternman to render immediate assistance in the event of entanglement by securing the engine and untangling the line or; in the event of a fall overboard, make all available attempts to recover the crewmember from the water.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purposes only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Sector Northern New England Investigations Division by phone at (207) 347-5005 or by email at secnneinv@uscg.mil.