

# HAZARD



# Alert

## RISK OF DROWNING

### HAZARD SUMMARY

In 2018, off the coasts of Prince Edward Island, Occupational Health and Safety Officers responded to several workplace incidents involving fishing vessels. As a result of the vessels being grounded, struck, or swamped by water, workers were placed in extremely hazardous situations that resulted in either traumatic rescues from rough water or death. In each situation, none of the workers were wearing a personal floatation device.

### CAUSE

Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in PEI. The hazards are diverse and unpredictable. Fair weather can deteriorate quickly and rapidly increase the risk of drowning. The work is strenuous, and it is often done on a moving, slippery and exposed platform.

The following can occur regardless of weather conditions:

- falling over the side of a boat or barge while reaching for a net or line or filling buckets while the boat is moving;
- falling between a boat and a wharf while boarding, disembarking, loading gear or unloading catch;
- getting caught in the gear and being pulled overboard;
- getting knocked overboard in rough water;
- grounding or capsizing of boat.

Not taking the proper precautions to prevent falling into the water can result in drowning.

### LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

A fishing or aquaculture vessel is considered a workplace, and as such, employers and workers must comply with the legal requirements under PEI's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Section 12 (1)(a) of the *Act* states:

"An employer shall ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect the occupational health and safety of persons at or near the workplace."

Part 45.4.1 (Lifejacket – Personal Flotation Device) of the OHS General Regulations states:

"An employer shall ensure that a worker who is employed under conditions that involve a risk of drowning is provided with and wears at all times a lifejacket or personal flotation device that is suitable to the conditions in the workplace; and of the correct size and appropriate for the weight of the worker who will wear it."



PEI fishing vessel leaving the harbour



PEI fishers wearing PFDs

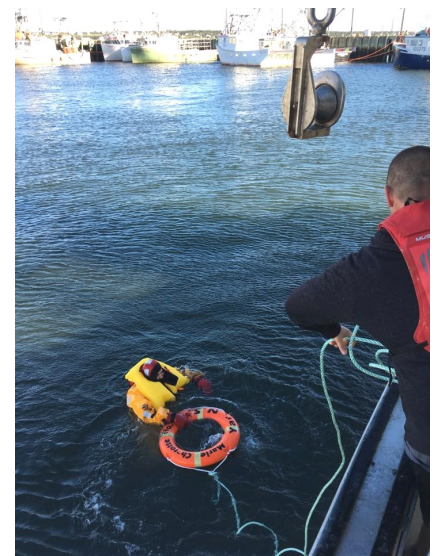
To report a serious workplace incident or hazard,  
call the 24hr OHS Emergency Line at 902-628-7513

## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- Wear an approved PFD or life jacket when working on the deck of a fishing or aquaculture vessel and wherever the risk of drowning is present.
  - Modern PFDs are lightweight and designed for comfort and allow for good mobility.
- Ensure PFDs have white or silver retroreflective material attached on the shoulder area that normally remains above the water surface.
- Wear an auto-inflatable flotation device over your clothing. Do not attach anything to it that might prevent it from inflating when needed.
- Ensure lifejackets and devices are inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations. Keep a record of all inspections and maintenance for the life of the PFD or lifejacket.
- Ensure your crew is trained in the use of emergency equipment in order to perform rescue operations in a safe manner, including fire and medical emergencies.
- Ensure that rescue equipment is inspected, properly maintained and readily available. Minimum rescue equipment includes;
  - A life buoy with 15m of rope
  - A boat hook
  - An audible alarm system to notify of an accident
- Conduct emergency drills for locating a missing crew member while on the water.
- Avoid overloading the vessel beyond its capacity.



*Inflatable PFD*



*Man Overboard Drill*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Workers Compensation Board website at [wcb.pe.ca](http://wcb.pe.ca) or contact the WCB Occupational Health & Safety Division at 902-368-5680 or 1-800-237-5049 (Toll free in Atlantic Canada).

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