
Introduction

Panel 1

As Chairman Sumwalt recounted in his opening statement, there is a long history of concern over safety within the commercial fishing industry. Many here today have been involved in studying safety, acting on recommendations, implementing programs to improve safety both within and outside the regulatory framework, and otherwise engaging industry for the benefit of safety.

The purpose of this panel is to identify the factors that contribute to the commercial fishing industry safety concerns and why it is the most dangerous occupation in the nation. In general, fatalities have decreased since implementation of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988, yet problems persist.

Just as the Act of 1988 was a landmark for safety within the commercial fishing industry, provisions of the new Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 will be a significant milestone in enhancing safety. Many, including members of this panel have worked diligently for this additional authority for the Coast Guard.

The goal of this panel is clarification of the state of fishing vessel safety, identification of major safety problems remaining in the industry, and identification of strategies and interventions to improve safety within the industry. This may include ideas on implementing the Coast Guard's newly acquired authority.

Although the Coast Guard has primary responsibility under statutes for development and enforcement of safety regulations, regulations are only a necessary beginning to safety. There must be non-regulatory efforts to enhance safety and we hope to hear about some of those efforts in this panel and throughout the remainder of the next two days.

Since implementation of the Act in 1988, there have been many valuable lessons gathered and acted upon as the industry itself has changed. But these efforts may not be embraced by those most directly affected, the fishermen themselves. We will hear today that safety is more than mere compliance with regulations. In the next two days, we should hear about other efforts that go beyond compliance to change the safety culture of the industry.

International shipping is required to comply with the International Safety Management Code which requires certification of their Safety Management System. This has resulted in companies changing their cultures to take ownership of safety in a proactive and verifiable manner. The NTSB has placed SMS for all domestic commercial vessels on its most wanted list of safety improvements so that domestic vessels realize the same safety benefits international shipping enjoys.

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A general comment on the panels: this panel is similar to the other panels in that panel members will have different perspectives on the issues. This is to be expected and is embraced by the NTSB. We hope that with diversity of opinion and ideas, new approaches to improving safety within the industry will result.

Since the Coast Guard is the major player in maritime safety and this panel will serve to frame the safety issues for the forum, it seems appropriate to start our panel discussions with a keynote speaker from the Coast Guard, which I will now introduce.

RADM Kevin Cook. Admiral Cook is the Director of Prevention Policy for the Coast Guard.. As the keynote speaker, he will be afforded additional time to make his remarks. Unfortunately, he will not be able to attend the entire panel proceedings.

Other distinguished members on Panel 1 include:

Richard Hiscock. Mr. Hiscock is an expert in commercial fishing vessel safety. He is extremely well versed in the history of both Coast Guard activities as well as the legislative history of safety laws applicable to the commercial fishing industry, especially the new enacted sections of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010.

Captain Eric Christensen. Captain Christensen has had a career of leadership in marine safety, including commercial fishing industry safety. He currently serves as Chief, Vessel Activities which includes responsibility for all commercial fishing vessel safety regulations and policies.

Dr. Jennifer Lincoln. Dr. Lincoln's primary responsibility within the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is the epidemiology of safety within the commercial fishing industry. She is recognized internationally as an expert in commercial fishing industry safety.

Jerry Dzukan. Mr. Dzukan currently serves as Chairman of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee and has been associated with the committee since its inception in 1989. He is also experienced in a number of Alaska's fisheries.

Marcel Ayeko. Mr. Ayeko is a chartered engineer with a Master's degree in Naval Architecture. He has been with the Transportation Safety Board of Canada since 1991 and is leading their nearly completed study of fishing vessel safety in Canada.

More complete biographical information on panel members is available on the NTSB website.

Admiral Cook.