

## MAINE COMMERCIAL FISHING SAFETY COMMITTEE

Over the past 20 years, New England has seen far too many deaths and injuries in the commercial fishing industry. In Maine during 2000, there were more there were more deaths in the commercial fishing industry than in any other sector of Maine's economy. From January 2000 to January 2001, 10 fishermen died in 6 separate incidents, ending an eight-year period in which 34 Maine fishermen lost their lives. After that deadly year, a group representing the fishing industry, state and federal government, the City of Portland and Southern Maine Technical College met to develop recommendations on how the State of Maine should respond to these tragic deaths in the fishing industry. This group reached consensus that the State should take a lead role in commercial fishing safety. The Governor created a Commercial Fishing Vessel Advisory Council that met and created recommendations to be reviewed by the Governor. Legislation passed in 2003 establishing a Commercial Fishing Safety Council within the Department of Marine Resources. The duties of this council are to make recommendations to the Commissioner with regard to information and advice concerning fishing safety issues.

The Council has 17 members, seven of whom are commercial fishermen. It has been chaired by a fisherman since its inception.

Following is a list of the Councils accomplishments:

Maine's limited entry regulations for the lobster industry include an apprenticeship program which requires a specified number of days at sea and an education component. In order to be eligible to obtain their initial lobster license, an applicant must complete a USCG approved Fishing Vessel Drill Conductor Training course. All applicants for Urchin and Scallop divers and tenders licenses must take a safety exam based on a booklet written by the Council. In addition, current first aid and CPR cards are required at the time of license renewal as recommended by the Council.

In June of 2006 the Council proposed Harbor visits in collaboration with the USCG and Marine Patrol to promote safety. USCG was available to do vessel inspections in locations up and down the coast - Vinalhaven, So. Harpswell, SW Harbor, Cape Porpoise and Corea. Many Council members were present at each location.

Began a dialog with USCG Headquarters in Washington on a proposal to amend rules to allow states to effectively partner with the USCG on commercial fishing vessel safety requirements – Creating safety parity between documented and state registered vessels on vessels of equal size within the same fishing area.

Worked with Mary E. Davis, Assistant Professor, UMO – to discuss creating a survey of compliance with safety regulations, and the economic impact of creating parity between documented and state registered vessels.

Ann Backus, Harvard School of Public Health and a member of the Commercial Fishing Safety Council has written several articles for Commercial Fisheries News on behalf of the Council.