

Safety At-Sea (SAS) Training for Commercial Fishermen June 4, 2010 — Montauk, NY Workshop Report

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Forty six commercial fishermen and fisheries biologists gathered on June 4, 2010 at Inlet seafood Packing House to participate in Safety At Sea (SAS) training workshop. This was the first time in about a decade since the last SAS course was administered in New York. This free training would not have been possible without the financial support of the **New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health** (NYCAMH) which primarily serves farming communities in central New York. Another partner was the **Long Island Occupational and Environmental Health Center** (LIOEHC), designated and funded by the **NYS Department of Health** as the Long Island center for the prevention and treatment of work-related health problems. LIOEHC donated fifteen flotation devices that were raffled off to participants at the end of the day.

The certified instructors, Ted Williams, Rodney Avila and Tom Toolis were from the **IMP Marine Group** in New Bedford, Massachusetts with training through the rigors of the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association.

Members of the **US Coast Guard Station Shinnecock** provided a trailer to teach commercial fishermen about repairing leaks and other damage control actions they can use to correct problems that can occur on their vessels while at sea.

Other partners included **Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Marine Program** and **New York Sea Grant**, who made the logistical arrangements and hosted the meeting.

Pre-Evaluation Results

The pre-evaluation exercise was designed to capture information to document the extent of attendees' previous safety training track record with particular attention to commercial fishermen trainees (N=46 commercial fishermen, N=10 fisheries biologists, and N=3 NY Sea Grant). Another goal was to capture data describing the commercial fishermen's training needs. The pre-evaluation results being presented are based upon the responses gathered from the fishing industry, only.

The fishing industry represented a relatively even mixture of captains and crew (48% or 22/46 and 52% or 24/46, respectively), and we found that a significant proportion (43% or 20/46) of the industry representatives were fishing for more than 15 years (Table 1).

We used the responses gathered in the pre-evaluation exercise to draw general conclusions about the fishing industry's familiarity with Safety At Sea (SAS) protocols (Figure 1). *Disclaimer: The authors did not conduct statistical significance testing and conclusions are based on the trends observed in the responses.* In future, the authors would like to conduct rigorous statistical testing to analyze trends and differences (if any) that may vary with position, fishing experience, etc.



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	Proportion (expressed as percent)		
	Captains n=22	Crew n=24	Combined (N=46)
Number of years fishing commercially:			
- less than 5 years	5	38	22
- 5 to 15 years	18	50	35
- more than 15 years	77	13	43
Current position on vessel	48	52	-
Basic SAS training history:			
- one year or less	23	46	35
- within past 5 years	45	33	39
- never	32	21	26
SAS drill practice on your own vessel:			
- one year or less	82	75	78
- within past 5 years	5	13	9
- never	14	13	13
Personal safety equipment inspection history:			
- one year or less	95	96	96
- within past 5 years	0	0	0
- never	5	4	4

Table 1: Pre-Evaluation Response Summary

In summary, the authors drew the following conclusions:

- The fishermen in attendance were relatively experienced, many claiming to have fished for at least 5 years
- Crew members claimed to be more current on their SAS training, many having received training in the past year
- Fishermen claimed to practice SAS drills onboard their own vessels, regularly
- Fishermen also claimed to obtain inspection of their personal safety equipment, regularly

Post Workshop Evaluation

An important goal of the pre-evaluation exercise was to document the failure rate of personal immersion suits. This analysis incorporates responses from both fishermen and fisheries biologists. Given the sensitive nature of the questions that were being asked, the survey instrument was anonymous in the hopes of improving data accuracy. These results have been partially summarized in Figure 2.

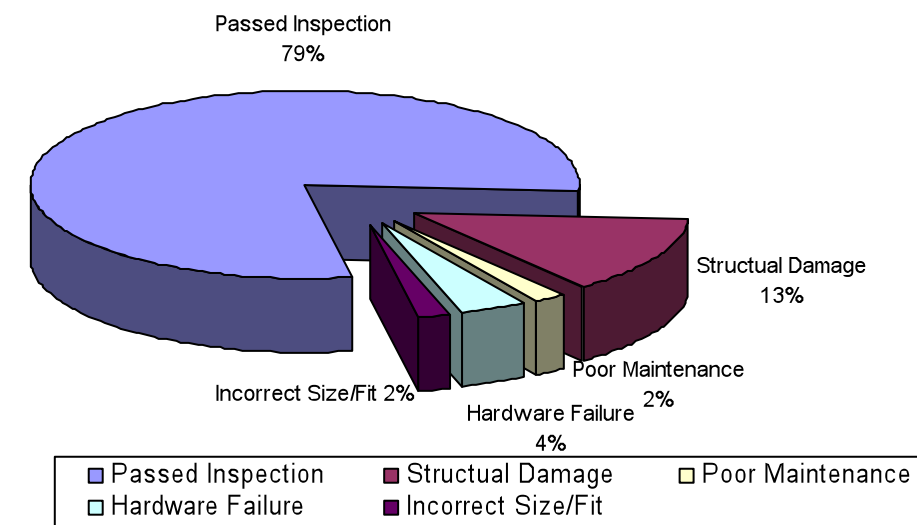


Figure 2: Results of inspection of personal safety equipment

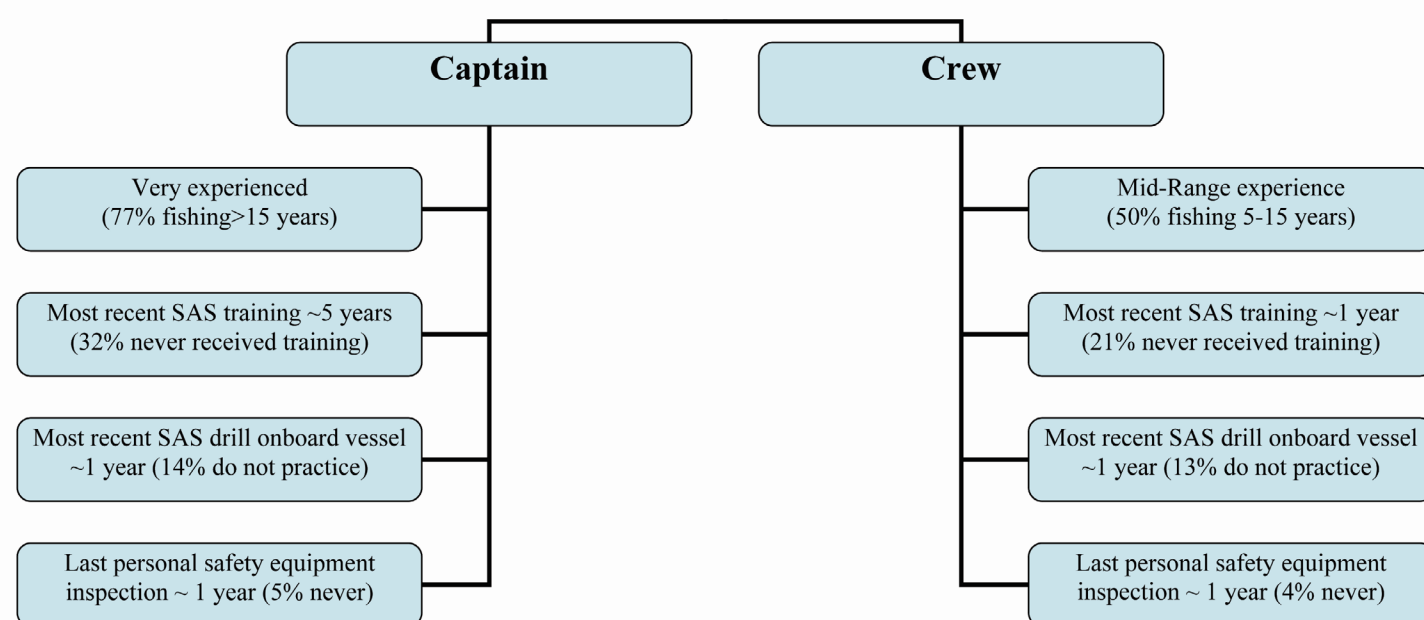


Figure 1: Conclusions about the extent of Safety at Sea (SAS) familiarity and practice among Long Island's commercial fishermen

Safety at Sea Workshop

Inspection of the immersion suit that was owned by each respective participant revealed:

- The majority of suits were in good condition and passed inspection
- The failure rate was significant (21%). Given the claims by the fishermen about having their personal safety equipment inspected ~ 1 year ago, we anticipated this value would be less.
- The reason for failure (of the inspection) was most likely due to compromise in the structural integrity (foam collapsed or disintegrated, open seams, etc.), or hardware failure (corrosion on zipper, whistle/light no longer works, etc). These are problems that indicate the suit is old and/or prolonged exposure to the weather elements.

Participants were asked about their views on what they considered to be a reasonable time frame for fishermen to receive SAS training. Based upon the responses, we conclude that:

- Many of the participants acknowledge and appreciate the value of receiving formal SAS training (only one respondent believe fishermen should never participate in SAS)
- Majority of respondents believe formal SAS training should be administered within a reasonable interval (at least within 5 years), although several respondents expressed a desire for more frequent intervals ranging from monthly to annually.

Participants were also asked for suggestion on other topics that could be included in future SAS training, and the responses included:

- First aid/CPR techniques
- Radar and radio training

In conclusion, the SAS training coordinators believe the training workshop was a tremendous success and managed to achieve the goals that were established. Participants learned something new and the organizers gather sufficient information to streamline future workshop curriculum.

You can read about the Safety At Sea (SAS) Training for Commercial Fishermen by visiting <http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/marinefish/article.asp?ArticleID=520>