Assessing Worker Satisfaction with PFDs in the Bristol Bay Salmon Gillnet Fishery

Professional Training Opportunities Program (PTOP) study

Heather Brandon
Alaska Marine Safety Education Association
October 22, 2020
Problem = Commercial fishing is widely regarded as one of the most hazardous occupations.
  • With a fatality rate of 74.2 per 100,000 workers, commercial fishing in the U.S. is second only to logging when it comes to work-related death.

Mission = reduce injury and death in the marine environment through education and training provided by qualified marine safety instructors.

Education Pathway = Drill Conductor courses are USCG accepted and meet requirements for fishermen onboard commercial fishing vessels.
70 class participants received novel flotation devices (PFDs).

Why do this study?
• On drift gillnet (small, 30 foot) boats, crew are not required to wear PFDs.
• Overboard deaths in the Bristol Bay salmon fisheries occur almost every season.
• Overboard deaths are preventable.
• Will fishermen wear these novel PFDs?
Most Respondents Wore the PFD

PFD Usage by Survey Respondents

- 80-100%: 5 respondents
- 60-80%: 2 respondents
- 40-60%: 3 respondents
- 20-40%: 1 respondent
- 10-20%: 1 respondent
- <10%: 1 respondent
- Never: 1 respondent

- 14 out of 55 people responded to the survey (25.4% response rate)
- 93% indicated some level of use
Demographics of Respondents

- Only 1 female respondent*
- Alaska residents vs. non-residents were evenly split
- 4 out of 5 respondents who wore the PFD 80-100% of the time were Alaska residents

*Women typically make up 14% of commercial fishing crew in Alaska
Commercial fishermen tend to be male and young.
Respondents were 93% male and 77% between the ages of 25 – 44.
Respondent Comments

Likes
- PFDs generally compatible with gillnet gear
- Durable
- Padded in key areas
- Flotation + rain/slim protection
- Warm

Dislikes
- Lack of USCG approval
- Bulkiness
- Difficulty donning and doffing
- Hindered movement
- Too hot

75% of respondents recommended the PFDs to a friend
Recommendations

- Improve study method
  - Consent
  - Timing
  - Contact information

- Expand study numbers
  - Increase response rate
  - Replicate usage rate
  - Understand cross-sector usage

- Expand study to other fisheries
  - Commercial
  - Recreational
  - Other gear types
Thank You!

University of Washington’s Northwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety (NWCOHS)

Reviewers:
Jerry Dzugan, Director of AMSEA
Gabe Dunham and Julie Matwayou, Alaska Sea Grant

Photos:
AMSEA, Bristol Bay Economic Development Council, Paula Cullenberg