

## FISHING PARTNERSHIP



SUPPORT SERVICES

### Safety at Sea during COVID-19 (updated 5/29/2020)

[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) is a disease caused by a new, highly contagious coronavirus. It primarily spreads from direct contact with an infected person, typically via coughing and sneezing. New research suggests it may also spread via aerosols (tiny air particles).

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath
- difficulty breathing
- chills
- muscle pain
- sore throat
- new loss of taste or smell

This list does not include all possible symptoms. Other less common symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, have also been reported.

#### SCREENING

Vessel owners/captains should screen all crew members before boarding, and ask:

- *Have you had any symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell?*
- *Have you been in close contact with a person who is symptomatic or quarantining due to COVID-19?*

Crews should also **measure their temperatures** using a temporal (no touch) thermometer.

Any crew member answering yes or who has a temperature over 100.4 degrees should not go to sea. Instead, they should stay home and contact their doctor.

#### TESTING

Diagnostic testing, which is done using a nasal swab, can diagnose even asymptomatic COVID-19. Most Massachusetts insurers (including MassHealth and all plans sold by the Health

Connector) must cover COVID-19-related testing and treatment at no cost. The uninsured may have to pay a fee. If you need to enroll in health insurance, contact a Navigator for assistance.

\*Please note: Testing can only tell if you were infected at the time your sample was collected, and it may take several days to get your test result. If you are testing crew members, encourage them to social distance after being tested so you can more reliably select a healthy crew. Also, [testing in Massachusetts](#) is increasing but is not yet available to all those who want it.

Antibody testing is currently not recommended as a public health strategy, as it is not yet known if recovering from COVID-19 offers lasting immunity.

## **CLEAN AND DISINFECT YOUR FISHING VESSEL**

The [COVID-19 guidance issued for businesses and employers](#) applies to Commercial Fishing Vessels. Because of the close working and living conditions on fishing boats, compliance with this guidance is especially important to prevent contraction and spread of the disease.

**Cleaning** with soap and water removes visible dirt and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection. Clean any visibly dirty surfaces *before* disinfecting

**Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces after cleaning and can further lower the risk of spreading infection. Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved disinfectant products](#).

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. A reminder – do NOT ingest or mix products. Mixing bleach with some common cleaning products can cause serious injuries.

Clean and/or disinfect all frequently touched work surfaces and equipment, including:

- throttles
- whistle
- switches
- chart tables
- countertops
- door handles
- light switches
- stove handles
- coffeepots
- fire extinguishers
- shucking tables
- winch handles
- bathrooms
- steering wheels
- banding tools
- bait table
- first aid equipment
- ladder
- radios
- electronic equipment\*

*\*Electronic equipment should be cleaned using a damp cloth.*

This cleaning/disinfecting should occur before getting underway and be repeated often during the trip.

## HYGIENE AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Crew members should wash their hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, and **social distance** (stay six feet apart) as much as possible.

Given the close working and living conditions on fishing boats, crew should wear **masks or [cloth face coverings](#)** at all times. Face coverings can include anything that covers your mouth and nose, such as bandanas or scarves. They should fit snugly and, if cloth, consist of multiple layers. Masks should be removed once damp and washed, if reusable, or thrown away. Single-use masks should never be reused. (Medical grade N95 masks should be reserved for frontline healthcare workers.)

Disposable [gloves](#) should be worn while cleaning or caring for crew members who become ill.

## FOOD SAFETY

Currently, there is no evidence showing that COVID-19 is transmitted by food products or packaging. Crews should follow [general food safety guidelines](#) while on board. .

## CREW ILLNESS

Vessel owners/captains should conduct daily symptom reviews and temperature checks while on board.

If during the fishing trip anyone displays symptoms of COVID-19, **try to segregate them from other crew members and RETURN TO PORT IMMEDIATELY**. Symptoms can progress quickly. Patients with emergency symptoms – including difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, confusion or inability to arouse, and bluish lips or face – require immediate medical attention.

**In addition to returning to port, report the illness to the Coast Guard** per the [Marine Safety Information Bulletin \(MSIB\) 02-20](#) (issued February 2, 2020, and updated April 23, 2020):

*“Illness of a person onboard a vessel that may adversely affect the safety of a vessel or port facility is a hazardous condition per 33 CFR160.216 and must be immediately reported to the U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) under 33 CFR 160.206. Cases of persons who exhibit symptoms consistent with 2019-nCoV must be reported to the COTP. Such persons will be evaluated and treated on a case by case basis.”*

## COAST GUARD DOCKSIDE SAFETY EXAMS

Is your U.S. Coast Guard Dockside Safety Examination sticker set to expire? According to [Marine Safety Information Bulletin 09-20](#) (issued March 26, 2020), the Coast Guard will allow local Officers in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) to address vessels on a case by-case basis. Based on the OCMI’s evaluation of the history of the vessel, and in consultation with the vessel

owner or operator, the OCMI may require a full or abbreviated exam or defer a required exam for up to 90 days.

## **MONTHLY DRILLS**

Conduct your monthly drills in Man Overboard, Flooding, Fire, and Abandon Ship.

A training video does not replace a drill, but it can be used to focus your crew and provide instruction before running your monthly drills. Visit the [Alaska Marine Safety Education Association \(AMSEA\) website](#) for videos or subscribe to their [YouTube channel](#) to receive their most up-to-date notifications.

*For iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch users:* The free [FV Drills app](#) is available on the App Store to help you facilitate and evaluate your drills.

## **FPSS SAFETY TRAININGS**

FPSS is committed to the health, safety, and economic security of the fishing community. We recognize that many commercial fishermen need training to meet regulatory and insurance requirements. If you are in immediate need of required training, please contact Director of Safety Training Ed Dennehy at [edennehy@fishingpartnership.org](mailto:edennehy@fishingpartnership.org) or Executive Vice President Dan Orchard at [dorchard@fishingpartnership.org](mailto:dorchard@fishingpartnership.org) for guidance and references.

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This document was created by Fishing Partnership Support Services, using materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the World Health Organization, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and other empirical sources. It is intended to be used as guidance only.

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