

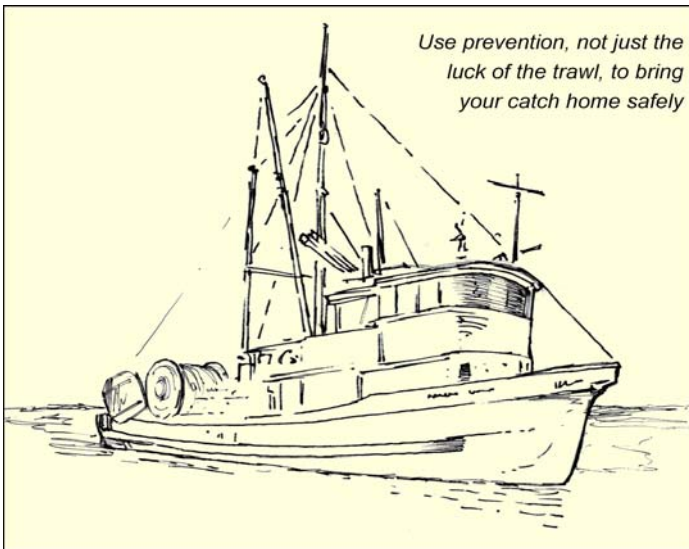
You Can Make Safety More Than the Luck of the TRAWL



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for WorkSafeBC

Trawling is a major fishing system in fish and other seafood harvests around the world, and certainly in BC. Trawling gained prominence here over the last few decades, but at the cost of some serious injuries and fatalities.

Many remember the loss of life and the lone survivor when the *Hope Bay* sank in Queen Charlotte Sound in 2004. Just this year, a young fisherman died after being crushed between a door and a davit.



You don't forget incidents like those, or even less serious ones like these from BC trawler log books and compensation claims files:

- A cable catching a crewmember's jacket and dragging him into the winch where he suffered multiple cuts.
- A fisherman suffering a separated shoulder as a cable hit and threw him against a trawl door – before he fell overboard.
- A man nearly drowned after he slipped while walking out on the cod end and ended up in the water.
- A finger severed by a knife while repairing the trawl net on deck.

- A badly strained back and leg after the cod end fell on a fisherman.
- Fish poisoning after a rockfish spine punctured an inappropriate boot worn on deck.

The sad truth is that cases like these can be prevented with a little effort and foresight, which starts with written safe work procedures. They should address all hazards of a vessel's operation, as well as the location of underwater fishing ground hazards that could snag the trawl – rock panicles, sunken vessels, pipelines, cables and the like.

Here are three basics to developing safe work procedures; involve crewmembers; discuss probable and actual hazards, and prior trawling incidents, and try to consider everything that could fail or go wrong at sea.

The trawl deck may seem exciting and dynamic, but it's also deceptively dangerous. Everyone aboard should know this environment – winches, cables, safe working loads on rigging, shooting, towing, hauling and dumping the trawl and handling the catch. Periodic inspections of rigging and equipment are imperative.

New hands and veterans alike must learn and periodically discuss trawl deck safety precautions, including load limits for trawl deck rigging and related hardware. Written procedures should address known hazards and focus on preventing incidents like those where crew may be:

- caught by the splitting strap and pulled overboard when shooting the trawl;
- hit by the cod end while standing in the strike zone forward of the drum when hauling the trawl; and
- struck by unsecured beams when attaching or detaching plumb shafts for shrimp trawling.

Many years ago while halibut fishing in Alaska among fleets of trawlers with mother or processing ships, I often heard about their injured crewmembers being airlifted to hospital. The problems tended to be unsafe work practices, not band luck; and I'm sure that holds true here and now. For themselves and their crews, BC trawler masters and owners need to make injury prevention a shipboard essential. It's the best way to make your own good luck.

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