

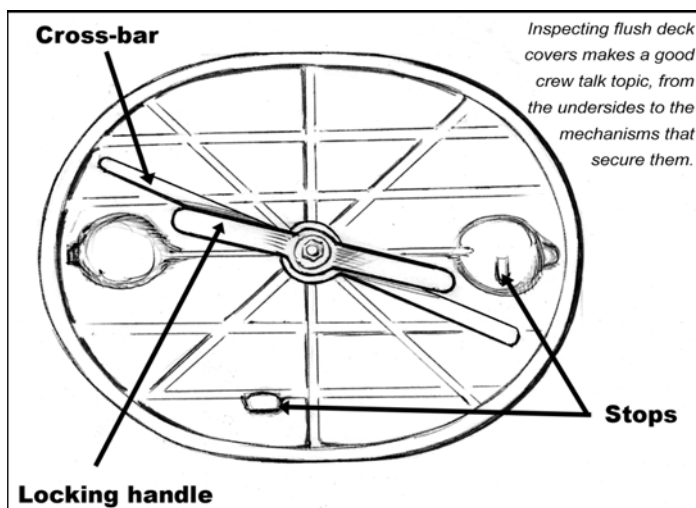
How You Can Talk the Talk and Walk the Talk on SAFETY



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Fishing used to mean longer seasons, three or four fisheries a year for some vessels and high earnings, which made good crews easy to find. Those aren't sure things any more, and widespread labour shortages in other industries mean well-paid, full-time jobs are readily available ashore.

When you do get the chance to fish these days, it may happen in a hurry, and you must scramble to find a deckhand or a crew, load gear and supplies and get away. Often, on-the-job training is needed because some of the crew you've hired are inexperienced or they have gotten rusty after being ashore too long.



There is much to know about working effectively and safely on a fishing vessel - whether it's loading gear, taking the wheel, handling the catch, maintaining operational stability or performing dozens of other tasks that allow little or no room for error if everyone is to come home safely in one piece.

The owner has an obligation to maintain a safe vessel, and it's the skipper's responsibility to see that all hands understand specific hazards and know how to deal with them. A good way for

the skipper to spread the safety message is to conduct crew talks. Given regularly, they develop and maintain safety awareness and commitment.

Called tailgate talks in many industries, crew talks help bridge the gap between someone generally knowing what to do and actually doing it correctly and safely. We're not talking about a full-blown training program, just a five to 15-minute meeting to talk about and perhaps demonstrate how to safely perform specific tasks or operate equipment. Crew talks are informal and, depending on the vessel and fishery type, topics might be about setting crab traps, getting in and out of a seine skiff, avoiding flying hooks when tuna trolling, ensuring load distribution, flushing deck fittings or hatch covers, wearing respirators for painting in confined spaces, and understanding other rules.

Start by thinking about situations on your vessel that could result in injuries, or what you've heard about incidents on other vessels in your fishery. When you choose a topic, prepare a simple one-page, point-form summary that outlines key ideas for yourself and your audience.

During the crew talk, tell crew members exactly what you want them to know and do to work safely. Try to use show-and-tell techniques, and involve everyone by asking questions and getting crew members to share related experiences.

You also need to walk the talk by observing work practices after a crew talk, reinforcing safe practices, and correcting unsafe practices. Experienced crew should also reinforce the need for green hands to work safely and correctly.

As a fisherman, I once heard a skipper tell another, "It's so hard to get a good hand, we sure as heck don't want to see him get hurt and lose him." That's likely even truer now, and running a safe operation is one way to keep good crew members on your vessel.

For more on this, go online to www.worksafebc.com, and type in "6-Minute Blast Crew Talk Series" next to "Search" in the upper right of the page.

Email comments to Ellen.Hanson@worksafebc.com, or phone her at 604-233-4008 in the Lower Mainland and toll-free elsewhere in BC to 1-888-621-7233.



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