

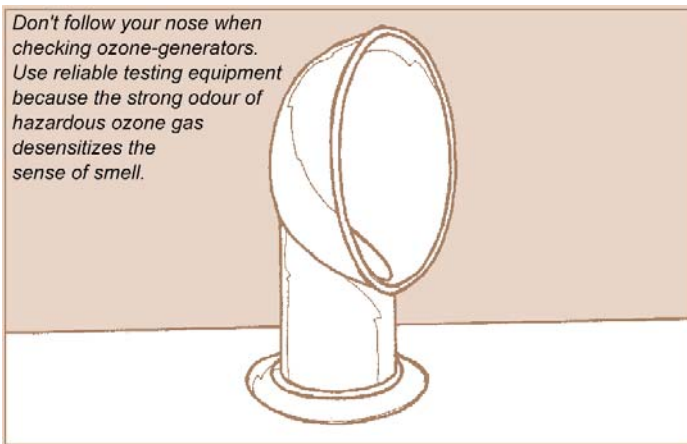
# A Free Best-Seller to Save Your Health... AND Maybe Your Life



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**M**ost commercial fishermen know their industry involves risks and they try to work around them. You're careful to avoid getting a fish hook in the hand or taking a fall on a slippery deck or leaving hatch cover unbattened.

Those are pretty obvious situations, but what about hidden risks that can lead to occupational disease for fishermen? It's also crucial for you to be aware of routinely-used hazardous materials that can lead to health problems ranging from skin rashes to kidney or lung damage or cancer.



At one time or another we've probably all worked with paints, solvents or harsh cleansers and created dusts from sanding, grinding, chipping or brushing. It's not likely, though, that many of us took a few minutes beforehand to read about protecting ourselves from the hazards. Some get away with this; but some don't and end up regretting it.

Break an arm or leg, and you can guess what to expect. But the picture's not so clear with occupational diseases. That's the reason they're called silent killers. While you could end up with a sever disability or even die, you might not have any immediate symptoms and it could be years before you even realize a serious health problem has developed.

## Finding hazardous materials on fishing vessels isn't hard.

Examples include:

- Cleaning agents such as bilge cleaners and bleach, as well as scale, rust and corrosion removers;
- Paints and solvents, resins and antifouling paints;
- Welding fumes, fuel vapours and engine exhaust;
- Fibreglass dust from sanding and grinding;
- Refrigerant gases like Freon; or
- Asbestos on some older vessels.

Ozone used to treat water in fish holds can pose special health risks to crew. High levels may contribute to eye and nose irritation, nausea, vomiting or pain or tightening in the chest. Over time, unsafe levels of ozone gas can cause severe lung damage and even death.

Legally, many hazardous materials used on fishing vessels are designated as "controlled products" under the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). This law requires suppliers to provide proper labelling and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for their products.

The vessel's owner and skipper have an obligation to ensure that every controlled product is adequately labelled and to make the MSDS available and to see that the crew is trained in the safe use of controlled products. Crewmembers are then responsible for following the MSDS and to seek more information from the skipper when necessary. All these requirements are necessary, and well worth meeting in full.

Find more online at: <http://www.worksafebc.com>. Then click on "Publications," and scroll down to "Top 10 Publications", and select the booklet *WHMIS at Work*.

If a free publication can be a best-seller, then that one truly qualifies as a must-read. Given the real dangers of hazardous materials in fishing, I think of it as a how-to book on saving your long-term health, and possibly your life. ■

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