
Public Forum on

Fishing Vessel Classification Standards

Hosted by

The U.S. Government Accountability Office
in conjunction with the
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Who is GAO?

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars as

- requested by Congress,
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- authorized by the Comptroller General, the head of GAO.

GAO employs roughly 3,000 people, whom collectively comprise 14 subject-area teams dispersed throughout its headquarters in Washington, D.C., as well as 11 regional offices across the United States.



Our Team

Tasked with reviewing commercial fishing vessel classification standards, we represent GAO's Acquisition and Sourcing Management (ASM) subject-area team:

- Michele Mackin, Director
- Diana Moldafsky, Assistant Director
- Laura Jezewski, Analyst-in-Charge
- Erin Stockdale, Senior Analyst
- LeAnna Parkey, Senior Analyst
- Ramzi Nemo, Analyst

Our Review

In the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015, Congress required GAO to review commercial fishing vessel classification and understand the impact throughout the United States that classification requirements have on commercial fishing vessel owners, vessel operators, and shipbuilders.

Upon completion of our review, GAO will provide Congress with our results on the impacts of commercial fishing vessel classification standards and issue a public report in summer 2017.

Review Objectives

- 1) What is known about the number of vessel failures and human injuries and deaths among incidents involving commercial fishing vessels?
- 2) How U.S. regulations for commercial fishing vessel classification compare with other countries' regulations?
- 3) What is known about the challenges and costs, if any, associated with statutory requirements for constructing and maintaining commercial fishing vessels to class society standards?
- 4) How the alternative-to-class approach compares with constructing and maintaining a commercial fishing vessel to class society standards?

Commercial Fishing Vessel Classification Requirements

Based on our understanding, classification requirements apply to:

- 1) Fish processing vessels that are built or undergo a major conversion after July 27, 1990;
- 2) Fishing, fish processor, or fish tender vessels at least 50 feet in overall length and built after July 1, 2013; that operate beyond 3 nautical miles from the territorial sea of the U.S./Great Lakes' coastline, operate with more than 16 on board, or engage in the Aleutian trade.

In addition:

- Fishing or fish tender vessels that are at least 50, but not more than 79 feet in overall length and built after February 8, 2016 and that operate beyond 3 nautical miles from the territorial sea of the U.S./Great Lakes' coastline, operate with more than 16 on board, or engage in the Aleutian trade may follow an alternative-to-class approach in lieu of classing.

Alternative-to-Class Process

Vessels that fall under the alternative-to-class approach are 50-79 feet in length, built after February 8, 2016, and must be:^a

- designed by a naval architect/engineer with standards equal to a classification society;
- constructed with oversight and certification provided by a marine surveyor;
- able to complete stability testing, have stability and loading instructions, and assigned loading mark;
- altered only with the review/ approval of a naval architect/engineer;
- subjected to a condition survey twice in 5 years, not to exceed 3 years between surveys;
- subjected to an out-of-water survey at least once every 5 years;
- reviewed/updated with the alternative requirements when altered or once every 5 years; and
- ready for inspection with available and well-maintained records.

^a Vessels that operate beyond 3 nautical miles from the territorial sea of the US/Great Lakes' coastline, operate with more than 16 on board, or engage in the Aleutian trade.

Forum Purpose

Tonight, from 7-9pm, we are holding a forum and want your candid opinions and real-life experiences on:

- Types and size of vessel(s) used in your operations;
- Costs and challenges associated with constructing and maintaining your vessel(s) to classification standards;
- Benefits and savings that you have realized (or expect to realize) from classing your vessel(s);
- Impacts that classing requirements have had on your decision to either purchase a new vessel(s) or continue to operate your existing vessel(s); and
- Potential benefits or challenges of the alternative-to-class approach.

Logistics

Forum on Commercial Fishing Vessel
Classification Standards

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

7- 9 PM

Toulouse B Meeting Room

All interested parties are invited to attend!



GAO on the Web

Web site: <http://www.gao.gov/>

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