

Coast Guard urges safety precautions in advance of Dungeness Crab season

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Oregon's commercial Dungeness crab fishery opens Dec. 16 from Cape Foulweather, just south of Depoe Bay, to the California border, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

The Coast Guard is urging mariners to take safety precautions in advance of the season, which in the past is historically followed by a spike in search and rescue cases involving commercial fishing vessels.

Most major marine casualties involving the loss of life or loss of a vessel occurs during Dungeness Crab season for an array of reasons including unavailability of lifesaving equipment, poor weather conditions, and fatigue.

"As we approach the upcoming Dungeness Crab Season, we want to emphasize the importance of mariners taking proactive measures to ensure their safety," said Capt. Justin Noggle, the commander of Coast Guard Sector Columbia River. "While our crews stand ready to respond along the Pacific Northwest coast, we urge all mariners to be prepared and take safety precautions to help ensure a successful crabbing season."

The Coast Guard urges mariners to verify their vessels are safe to operate by conducting routine maintenance and pre-departure checks of vital systems and safety equipment prior to getting underway. This includes ensuring the proper operation of machinery, electrical systems, propulsion, steering, bilge/dewatering systems, fuel systems, and ensuring filters have been replaced per manufacturer's recommendations.

It is critical to verify proper operation and readiness of all lifesaving equipment to include life rafts, emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), hydrostatic release units, life jackets, immersion suits, distress signals, and ring life buoys. It is strongly recommended that commercial fisherman schedule a dockside safety examination for their vessels with Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Examiners who can assist in identifying and addressing safety concerns.

Please also visit www.fishsafewest.info as a resource for more information and to download a vessel checklist.

In extremely hazardous conditions, bars may be closed entirely if they exceed the operating parameters of Coast Guard search and rescue resources. Bar closures are announced via broadcast notice to mariners on VHF-FM channel 16 and 22A. Current bar conditions and restrictions for Washington, Oregon and northern California are posted at www.weather.gov/pqr/AllBars.

To arrange for a commercial fishing vessel safety exam please contact 503-572-3516 or email FVSPortland@uscg.mil.

To report a marine casualty, please contact Sector Columbia River Commander Center at 503-247-4000.