

- Determine how you would launch survival craft while keeping your balance.
 - Check operability of other equipment you would want to take off the vessel (flares, logbook, handheld radio, strobe light, additional flotation, water, food, etc.) that you have placed in an accessible abandon ship kit or bucket.
 - Close all doors and hatches when leaving the vessel.
- The solo operator faces many challenges in an emergency at sea. With no other crew to share duties with, it is even more important to practice and be prepared.

Monthly Solo Operator Drills

"I just fish by myself! Why do I have to do emergency drills? No one else is even on the vessel." In fact, solo operators of fishing vessels have even more reason to do their own emergency drills. Unlike vessels with crews, there is only one person available to fight fires, stop flooding, make a distress call, and rescue themselves from the water—**YOU!** With so much to do, and with your own life at stake, it takes practice to develop automatic muscle memory for the proper steps to take in an emergency. Solo operators will be better prepared by preplanning and pre-staging their safety and survival equipment and by practicing how to do the many needed tasks by themselves.

Solo Man Overboard (MOB) Drill

Man overboard events on solo-operated vessels often end up as casualties. It is especially important for solo operators to practice self-recovery and the recovery of victims from other vessels.

- Have something you can grab from the water to help you climb on board by yourself. Try boarding your vessel from water level while it is moored. Think of creative ways for self-rescue that work for your vessel. **Before** the MOB occurs mount a permanent ladder where it does not interfere with gear, or mount a line over the rail within reach of the water that will release a rope ladder when tugged.
- Most people don't expect to go overboard until the split second before falling. Then it's too late to put on a PFD (personal flotation device). Wearable PFDs are available and some have eliminated snagging hazards. Inspect the PFD for condition, fit, and operation. Inspection is especially important for inflatable PFDs.
- Monthly, operate or deploy the MOB rescue device. Check for operability, wear, or decay.
- Buy and check monthly an electronic MOB device that will shut off your engine once you enter the water. This gives you a chance to catch up to your vessel. Other MOB alarms will alert other vessels in the area.
- Increase your odds by dragging a buoy tied to a floating line behind the vessel. Loops in the line will make it easier to hold onto and climb up the line.

- ___ Review how you could recover a crewmember from another vessel who is a MOB victim or in a survival craft. Practice throwing the life ring or rescue throw bag for reaching the victim, test the sling for securing the victim, and check blocks, winches, or hydraulics used to assist in bringing a victim on board.

Solo Flooding Drill

- Reviewing your gear and procedures will greatly aid in a flooding emergency.
- ___ Check the seals on all watertight doors and portholes for cracks, gap, paint.
 - ___ Check all doubled hose clamps on all underwater hoses.
 - ___ Hang conical, wooden plugs near through-hull fittings to control flooding if needed.
 - ___ Test the vessel's dewatering pumps monthly. Do they work?
 - ___ Test your bilge alarm monthly. Does it work?
 - ___ Assemble a flooding control kit or review the contents and condition of your kit.
 - ___ Check all possible sources of flooding and look for watertight integrity.

Solo Fire Drill

- A fire drill by the operator can be more of a hands-on practice.
- ___ Position the vessel so the wind will not fan the simulated fire-set autopilot.
 - ___ Remove the fire extinguisher from the bracket for practice in re-
leasing.
 - ___ Note how the extinguisher operates but do not twist off the safety pin! Feel its weight and what hand it would be more comfortable in. Inspect the extinguisher gauge (if provided), overall condition, and if fire extinguisher is the correct class, size, and agent.
 - ___ Operate fuel shut-off valves and breakers (for electrical fires). Find them in the dark.
 - ___ Look for sources and locations of potential fires on your vessel, and do a "boundary check" around the outside of the space to look for hazards and survival equipment that would need to be secured or removed.

- ___ Close doors, hatches, portholes, and other access to the "affected" space. What works for stuffing into vents to simulate shutting off supply of oxygen?
- ___ Test all fire and smoke alarms.
- ___ Look for frayed wires, ensure fuel lines are tight, and eliminate other fire hazards.

Solo Abandon Ship Drill

- The operator can add the distress call to the fire or flooding drill.
- ___ Practice saying aloud the first 5 critical parts of a Mayday **without** keying the radio.
 - ___ Test the general alarm.
 - ___ Release the EPIRB from its cradle to get familiar with its use.
 - ___ Check the date on the battery and hydrostatic release. Make sure the registration has not expired and that the alphanumeric code on the registration sticker is the same as the code on your EPIRB. Ensure the EPIRB is free to deploy and not under an overhang. Test EPIRB and log the test date monthly. Reinstall it correctly.
 - ___ Pyrotechnics. Check expiration dates on flares and smokes. Read directions and practice the hand motions for igniting them. You may need to use them in the dark, so you'll need muscle memory for the task.
 - ___ Test your DSC radio by using the text feature with another mariner with a DSC-equipped radio with whom you have shared your MMSI number. But be sure not to send out an emergency notice! Make sure your DSC-equipped radio is connected to your GPS and that you have programmed it with your MMSI.
 - ___ Don immersion suit (or PFD) in 60 seconds or less. Try to better your previous time.
 - ___ Inspect your immersion suit (or PFD) and check light and battery date.
 - ___ Note alternative escape routes and make sure none are blocked.
 - ___ If you have a survival craft, release the strap manually and ensure the strap can be released by hand and the life raft repack and hydrostatic release are installed correctly and not expired. Ensure craft is free to self deploy without entanglement on rigging or gear.