



Inspecting Fishing Vessels for Substantial Risk

Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

Why does Ecology inspect fishing vessels for substantial risk?

Washington State’s legislature authorized the Department of Ecology to implement measures that would result in zero spills. Inspecting fishing vessels, as authorized in RCW 88.46.050, helps prevent spills and moves us closer to our zero spills goal.

Where can I find the fishing vessel inspection checklist?

Ecology inspectors use an [inspection checklist](#) to help determine if a vessel poses a substantial risk to the marine environment or public health and safety. The checklist is based on the Accepted Industry Standards for fishing vessels.

What are the Accepted Industry Standards for fishing vessels?

The [Accepted Industry Standards for fishing vessels](#) were developed in 2007 in coordination with industry and are based on best practices, federal regulations, and international conventions. They address vessel operating procedures, personnel policies, and management practices. These standards set the baseline for a well-managed and safely operated vessel.

Which fishing vessels are inspected?

We inspect fishing vessels that are 300 gross tonnage or more, and are engaged in the commercial catching, harvesting, or processing of fish, or in tendering to or from vessels that catch, harvest or process fish.

How are inspections scheduled?

We schedule fishing vessel substantial risk inspections in advance with vessel operators to ensure personnel are available. We are flexible with our scheduling to accommodate the operational complexities of the industry.

What is the goal of these inspections?

Our goal is to evaluate and reduce a vessel’s risk of an oil spill. We believe a strong oil spill prevention program is the only way to achieve the goal of zero spills. During our inspections, we use our checklist to help vessels identify opportunities to increase marine safety and prevent oil spills.

What happens if the vessel falls below the standards?

If a vessel falls below Accepted Industry Standards to a degree where there is a serious threat to public health, safety, or the environment, it is considered a substantial risk. If serious omissions or violations of U.S. or international regulations are found during an inspection, we immediately share this information with the U.S. Coast Guard.



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