



NOAA
FISHERIES



Changes in Life Raft Requirements for Commercial Fishing Vessels

The Northeast Fisheries Observer Program will no longer provide supplemental valise life rafts to observers and at-sea monitors after June 30, 2023. According to 46 U.S.C. § 4502(b)(2)(B) it is the vessel's responsibility to have a properly installed life craft, when applicable, with the capacity to hold all persons on board, including the observer.

If life rafts do not have sufficient capacity for all persons on board, including the observer when a vessel is selected for coverage, the observer is required to issue a safety deficiency letter and cannot sail with the vessel until the issue is rectified. If a vessel sails on a fishing trip without an observer when selected for coverage, they would be in violation of federal regulations. A violation may result in the assessment of civil penalties, per 50 CFR § 648.14 and 50 CFR § 229.7.

Vessels selected for observer or at-sea monitor coverage must meet all U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) safety regulations and must also display a current USCG Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examination (CFVSE) decal. These requirements are outlined in the USCG publication "Federal Requirements for Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels." All safety equipment, servicing, and registrations must be present and current (i.e., not expired). A checklist of the required safety gear can be created using the USCG's "Commercial Fishing Vessel Checklist Generator." Please see the websites linked on the left for more details.



[Federal Requirements for Commercial Fishing Industry Vessels](#)



[Commercial Fishing Vessel Checklist Generator](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

NOAA Fisheries
Fisheries Monitoring Operations

ME to NY contact:
Kristina Thorpe
508-566-5988
kristina.thorpe@noaa.gov

NJ to NC contact:
Bridget St.Amand
508-274-4859
bridget.st.amand@noaa.gov