

What Crew Members On-board Fishing Vessels in Alaska Need to Know:

The Alaska Job Center Network would like you to read the following information to help you prepare for a job or career in Alaska's fishing industry.

Job Duties may include the following:

- Load and unload equipment and catch
- Maintain and repair equipment, gear, and nets
- Operate fishing gear or hydraulic equipment
- Set and pull in nets and lines
- Extract catch (by hand or other device) from nets
- Wash, ice, and stow away the catch

Advisory - Some of the reasons crew members leave should carry a warning to job seekers to proceed with caution. **Commercial fishing is rated as one of the most hazardous occupations in America.** Reputable boat operators rarely have serious mishaps, nor do they lose good crew members through misunderstandings. It is a good idea to find out why the departed crew member left. A vessel with numerous crew vacancies during the harvest season warrants investigation before new crew accept a job on it.

Work Environment - There is no standard work environment for workers on-board fishing vessels. Ship sizes, housing conditions, pay, and hours worked may all vary based on the employer and location. Fishing often requires an employee to be on their feet performing physically demanding and strenuous work for long hours. Fishing vessel workers typically wear rain gear, rubber boots, and gloves and perform the majority of their duties at sea.

Types of Fishing Vessels - Fishing vessels range from small skiffs of 20 feet to large factory trawlers of 300 feet or longer. The vessels may fish anywhere from near shore (Near-Shore vessels) to 200 miles at sea (Offshore vessels), they may also operate as Floating Processors (floaters). The larger river systems of the state also support skiff fisheries. In 1999, approximately 25,060 crew licenses were issued to fish commercially in Alaska waters.

Near-Shore vessels that operate during the summer months and concentrate on the herring and salmon fisheries comprise the largest portion of the fleet. The majority of these are smaller vessels such as gill-netters, purse seiners, and hand and power trollers averaging in size from 20 to 60 feet. Depending on the fishery and the configuration of the vessel, the number of crew members varies from one to six.

Floating processors, referred to as "floaters," also operate near shore. Floaters process seafood delivered from inshore fishers and usually rely on other motor vessels to move them from one location to another. Work on floaters may be paid by the hour rather than by crew share.

Offshore Vessels (larger vessels that vary in size) dominate the deeper offshore reaches of the coastal waters. The area or zone where fishing takes place is commonly referred to as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or the Fisheries Conservation Zone (FCZ), which extends from three to 200 miles offshore. Vessel size ranges from about 50 to over 300 feet in length. Most operate year round, targeting bottom fish or whitefish (referring to the flesh color) and shellfish. The primary gear types are trawl, pot, and long-line. Factory trawlers are capable of harvesting and processing simultaneously. Corporations usually own the large vessels. Most are based out of California, Oregon, and Washington, while a small number are based in Alaska. Vessels of this type are normally fully crewed before they depart their home port for the offshore fishing grounds of Alaska. Many of the offshore companies have developed recruitment efforts to hire workers in Alaska.

The size of the vessel has little bearing on the number of fishers or deck crew required for the various fisheries. For example, a trawler of 160 feet in length can operate efficiently with a crew complement of five, which is about the same needed for a 58-foot purse seiner in the near-shore fishery.

Housing / Accommodations - Onboard smaller vessels, the crew will eat, relax, and sleep with very little privacy. Toilet facilities on some vessels can be either non-existent or somewhat exposed to other crew members, while on others there is a shower and toilet for individual use. If privacy is important, a would-be crewmember should ask about these facilities.

Transportation - Find out what the transportation arrangements are before accepting a job. Employers try to hire close to the job site. Each company has policies on transportation, and job seekers must pay close attention. Alaska law requires



Transportation (continued) - that if you are hired by a company that pays your way to the worksite, the employer is required to pay your return fare ... UNLESS you are discharged for cause, which may include alcohol consumption or drug abuse, prolonged unexcused absences, or if you don't tell the truth on your application for work.

Career - It can be difficult to get a fishing vessel position but once an employee works and meets an employers expectations, there is potential for a rewarding seasonal career. To find out more about seafood career information and ways to advance in the industry, visit our Seafood- Career Streams web page online at:

www.jobs.alaska.gov/seafood/careerstreams

If you are interested in pursuing a fisheries-related career, you should learn about the A.W. "Winn" Brindle Memorial Education Loan which can provide loans to Alaska residents for full-time study in fisheries-related programs. To learn more, visit:

<http://acpe.state.ak.us/page/257>

Pay - Minimum wage laws do not apply to crew member jobs in the industry. However, certain federal and state laws concerning hiring of persons under the age of 18 do apply.

Wages are often based on a share or percentage of harvest earnings. Newcomer deckhand earnings range from 1.5% to 10% of the adjusted gross catch, depending on location and type of fishery and the skills the worker possesses. Some vessels offer a daily rate from \$50 to \$100 instead of a percentage of the catch. Recent market conditions have caused some share rates to decline.

In addition to fishing, crew members are expected to perform work on their vessel and its associated gear without additional pay for these activities. The daily rate, a share, or percentage of the catch is considered pay for all work performed. New crew members are advised to obtain a signed work agreement or contract that clearly explains the pay and other entitlements *before* going to work.

Costs - A crew member can be expected to purchase specialized apparel such as:

- wet weather gear (\$100 per set)
- rubber boots (\$40 to \$70 per pair)
- gloves (\$2 to \$12 per pair)
- wrist covers or sleeves (\$5 per set)
- sleeping bag (\$70 to \$200)

The fishing vessel owner/operator should provide other specialized gear required by the Coast Guard, such as a survival suit. Make sure the vessel has a good safety reputation.

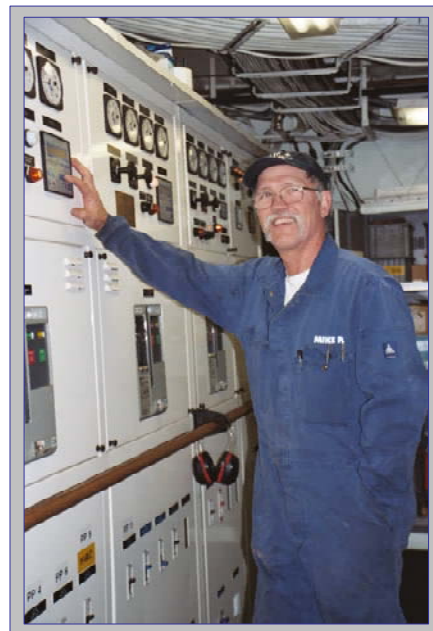
Crew members supply their own commercial fishing licenses. In 2009, commercial fishing license fees are \$60 for a resident and \$165 for a non-resident. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has a website offering crew license information and purchase: <http://www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license/>

** Many boats charge a share of the operating expenses to crew members. These expenses may include:

- food
- fuel
- bait
- ice

Wage/Hour and Safety Information - The Alaska Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development- Division of Labor Standards and Safety (LS&S) may help people who have wage or safety problems. For problems regarding wages, contact LS&S in Anchorage at (907) 269-4900; in Fairbanks at (907) 451-2886; and in Juneau at (907) 465-4842. For workplace safety issues (OSHA), call toll-free: 1-800-770-4940.

Employee safety issues that arise on vessels outside the three-mile limit are handled by the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Contact OSHA in Anchorage at (907) 269-4940. For potential problems with wages earned on vessels outside the three-mile limit, call the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment



Wage/Hour and Safety Information (continued) - Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division at toll-free number: 1-866-487-9243.

Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. The possibility of injury is ever present in every aspect of the work. The lack of medical assistance in the event of injury or illness increases the hazard. Getting to the nearest clinic or hospital is totally dependent on the weather and availability of special transportation. The wait can be hours, or even days. Before accepting an offer of work, applicants should ask about the safety equipment and procedures aboard their intended vessel. Once hired, crew members must obey all safety rules.

Youth Workers - Alaska law prohibits minors under age 16 from working on a fishing boat UNLESS the boat is operated by a parent. Federal law may be more restrictive.

Job seekers ages 16 and 17 must have a work permit, issued by the Alaska Division of Labor Standards and Safety (LS&S). A work permit requires the original or faxed signature of a parent or legal guardian. A good employer will ensure that youth under age 18 work appropriate duties and hours. To contact LS&S in Anchorage call (907) 269-4900 or in Juneau at (907) 465-4842. You can also visit the LS&S website at www.labor.state.ak.us/lss to download/print a Youth Work Permit or other forms and publications.

Child Labor Laws are in place to protect youth and young adults from danger and exploitation. We recommend that youth ages 14-17, read through 'Know Your Rights' at the following web address: www.labor.state.ak.us/lss/rights.htm

Hourly wage and pay information for youth employment is also available from the Wage and Hour Administration web site at: www.labor.state.ak.us/lss/whome.htm

Recruitment - During harvest seasons, prospective crew members must walk the fishing docks to follow up each word of mouth lead to speak with the skipper personally. The travel and waiting for such an opportunity can be costly, both physically and monetarily. Crew members rarely leave good jobs, so only a small percentage of hopefuls find their berth in this manner.

Most Near-Shore vessels are independently owned and operated. Obtaining employment on them is difficult. Replacement crew members are often family or are obtained through an industry association. Crew members are hired well before the season begins.

For job seekers in Anchorage, the Anchorage Midtown Job Center- Seafood Office at 3301 Eagle Street is an excellent resource. Companies usually hire new workers as processors to work in the factory below deck and promote workers from these factory positions to work on deck as deckhands.

A map showing when fishery seasons occur in Alaska is available at: www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us

The Alaska Job Center Network lists Seafood jobs online via the ALEXsys (Alaska's Job Bank) website at: <http://alexsys.labor.state.ak.us> ALEXsys allows you to: search by specific occupation (e.g., cook, mechanic, quality control, etc.) or location (e.g., Naknek, Dutch Harbor, Kodiak, etc.), apply for jobs, and more. For information on job fairs and the location of our Seafood office, visit the Seafood Jobs- Recruitment webpage at: www.jobs.alaska.gov/seafoodrecruit There is no fee for using Alaska Job Center Network services.

Applicants must be physically present in Alaska to be referred through the Alaska Job Center Network to one of these jobs. Employers also recruit workers through their companies or other reliable recruitment offices.

Website - For more information on jobs in Alaska, visit: www.jobs.alaska.gov or you can go directly to the Seafood Jobs- Recruitment webpage at: www.jobs.alaska.gov/seafoodrecruit to learn about scheduled seafood job fairs, links to related sites, and find job applications that are available for printing. You can also visit ALEXsys (Alaska's online job bank) at: <http://alexsys.labor.state.ak.us> which lists seafood jobs currently open statewide .

Contact Information -

Rural Alaska (villages & small towns): Call toll-free 1-800-473-0688

Anchorage: Call (907) 269-4746 or (907) 269-4573 for daily updates

TDD-Relay Alaska Operator: Call toll-free 1-800-770-8973

