



Quick, Honey, Put on a Life Jacket!



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A number of years ago, as I was doing a (free) vessel exam for the owner of a very substantial yacht, I got to the part where I ask to see the life jackets. (see SSP, "Life Jackets Save Lives - Maybe Yours", 2/11/09) He pointed me to a locker, which I opened to find the life jackets, stowed under an anchor, chain and additional rode. This column is about that.

No Good If You Can't Get To Them

I promptly asked him, "sir, do you have any grandchildren?" "Why, yes, I do. 5 of them. Why do you ask?" I replied, "Imagine what forces you will be under when you say these words to your grandchildren, 'quick! Put on a life jacket!' and you point to this locker. Which one of your grandchildren will be able to move this anchor to get to the life jackets - which are still in their wrappers, btw." He blanched.

No safety equipment is of any use if you can't get to it. Or, no one knows where it is except you, the skipper, who is likely to be mighty busy just when safety equipment is needed. Talk about pressure!

Pre-Underway Check List

By USCG regulations, before we leave the dock on a mission - of any type or any duration - we must, as a crew, go through a check-list akin to a vessel exam. This includes, among many items, where are:

1. The extra life jackets (we must have ours on at all times, which is an EXCELLENT idea, skipper (see SSP, "Do I REALLY Need to Wear a Life Jacket", 9/24/08));
2. The medical kit - and ensure that none of the perishable supplies have in fact perished due to the passage of time;
3. The "visual distress signals", i.e., flares - and that they have not expired and are serviceable (see SSP, "Visual Distress Signals and the Private Boat Captain", 9/27/06);
4. The boat hook - a good tool for extending for retrieving something - or someone - that may be just out of reach;
5. The Man Overboard "apparatus", i.e., line and ring to throw to someone who has indeed fallen overboard (see SSP, "Maaaaaaaann Overboard!", 11/19/08);
6. And fire extinguishers (see SSP, "Vessel Afire!", 3/14/07).

This list is by no means exhaustive but it represents some of the major categories of pending disaster that may befall a skipper. While you are dealing with the boat and how it needs to be used to respond to the emergency, your crew can be dealing with the crew's response. Whether it be a grounding (see SSP, "Hard Aground - Now What!?", 7/9/08), or far worse, a vessel sinking being dealt with (see SSP, "We're Sinking", 12/13/06), you as the skipper have a lot on your mind and a lot to deal with. Can you imagine yourself also having to stop dealing with the emergency at hand so that you can direct crew to emergency equipment that will protect them and you from the effects of that emergency?

But Everyone Has a Pressure Point...

Beyond which, they start to crack. What do you do if the crew can't handle the pressure as well as you are handling it?

Well, how about handing them the laminated lay-out of your boat with the location of all the equipment labeled? Seriously, of all the risks that you spend time and money in preparing for and against, have you thought about panic as a risk? What then?

"Honey, hey, enough! Here, look at this - right now - and go get everybody in life jackets. Now!"

It is likely to reduce the panic because now the crew has something to focus on other than the water sloshing on the floor boards...

Oh, remember the comment about a (free) vessel exam at the start of this column? If you want one, email me below or see SSP, "No Fuss, No Muss - and Your Favorite Price (free) - Vessel Exams", 4/8/08)

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing..."



FISHING WITH TONY

CT, NY & RI TELL PORGY ANGLERS TO KEEP ON FISHING

by TONY SALERNO

Officials Cite Economic Emergency and Healthy

It's official, coastal anglers in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island can keep on fishing for porgies (scup) for the rest of the season!


The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) have each announced that their respective recreational porgy fisheries will remain open through the end of 2011. The recreational porgy season had been scheduled to close on September 27; however, the three adjoining states have rescinded the closure due to the health and abundance of the coast-wide scup population.

For anglers fishing from shore or on private vessels, the minimum size (10-1/2 inches) and bag limit (10 fish) remain unchanged during the extended season. For passengers fishing from a party or charter vessel, the current 40-fish bag limit remains in place only through October 11; thereafter, the bag limit returns to 10 fish. The 11-inch minimum size for those anglers fishing aboard party or charter vessels remains unchanged through the rest of the year.

In their official release, NYDEC said they were officially "extending the season based on data that show that the scup stock is rebuilt to very high abundance, and that commercial and recreational harvest on the coast is projected to fall nearly 10 million pounds short of this year's allowable harvest of these popular food and sport fish. Also, increased access to the robust stocks of scup could redirect fishing effort and reduce the ecological risks faced by the local tautog population which has been declared over fished."

"The Recreational Fishing Alliance applauds officials in those Atlantic States for using the economic emergency occurring along our coastline in taking this bold position," said executive director Jim Donofrio. "If the fisheries service can use emergency rulemaking authority to close down fisheries when they think the science supports it, our coastal states should be given authority to take similar action to reopen fisheries when the science warrants. In the case of scup, clearly the science supports giving our anglers increased opportunity." The fact that states have to go through such drastic political maneuvering just to allow their anglers to catch a few fish from a healthy stock shows that our federal fisheries law, the Magnuson Stevens Act, needs to be fixed.

Saltwater anglers are reminded that recreational porgy fishing in federal waters did officially close on September 27; federal waters occupy portions of Block Island Sound, all of the Atlantic Ocean beyond three miles from shore, but not Long Island Sound.



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