

NY Sea Grant Recognized for Award-Winning Training Program

New York Sea Grant has been recognized for its training programs that are helping to keep commercial fishermen safe at sea. Search and rescue operations for commercial fishermen cost the US Coast Guard (USCG) millions of dollars each year. Under the guiding principles of Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (commonly known as the Magnuson Act) first enacted in 1978 to manage marine fisheries in the United States, new regulations should not force commercial fishermen to take unnecessary risks while fishing. In 2010, Congress approved the United States Coast Guard Authorization Act that promises to establish mandatory safety standards in the commercial fishing fleet, and NOAA Fisheries began to engage the public for this purpose.

In 2011, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) assisted commercial fishermen to be recertified in safety-at-sea for the second year. This training was facilitated with funding from New York Sea Grant, the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Long Island Occupational and Environmental Health Center, the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Marine Program, and Inlet Seafood Packing House.



Proper use of a distress flare is part of NYSG Safety-At-Sea training. Photo: Paul C. Focazio, NYSG



(From far right) USCG Regional Commander Long Island Sound Sector Captain Joseph N. Vojvodich and NYSG Director James Ammerman congratulate Safety-at-Sea Project Coordinator NYSG's Antoinette Clemetson. Photo: Barbara A. Branca, NYSG

In addition to routine safety drills, e.g., practice using immersion suits and correct techniques to use distress flares, and free inspection of onboard safety equipment, participants had access to a health clinic. Several fishermen underwent a physical exam and received a new Personal Flotation Device.

More than 100 commercial fishermen have benefited from this program to date. Those visiting the health clinic received blood pressure, glucose and other tests, and a guided tour of the USCG cutter rescue vessel. This training helps reduce the need for costly sea search and rescues for commercial fishermen (most in Alaska, but many in the Northeast).

The US Coast Guard bestowed NYSG with a Certificate of Appreciation for this outreach exercise that helps to fulfill one of the agency's goals. A second award was received from the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium, who selected project coordinator and NYSG Marine Fisheries Specialist, Antoinette Clemetson, to receive the Outstanding Outreach Achievement Award.

This project meets the performance measures of Sea Grant's Safe & Sustainable Seafood Supply focus area.
New York Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

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