



June 17, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Van Atten 
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Instructions for Filling Out the Pre Trip Vessel Safety Checklist

The Pre Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC) is meant to increase personal safety awareness, as well as, to provide enhanced safety information to NEFOP staff and future observers regarding individual vessels.

This memo will help clarify how to fill out the PTVSC properly. The new format was issued back in March (version 3-09), and is designed to be scanned. The scanning procedure is very sensitive in recognizing numbers and characters, therefore, the PTVSC MUST BE filled out neatly and clearly. There have been significant problems with scanning due to improper completion and markings outside boxes, etc. This leads to data processing delays. Please read and follow these instructions to help improve program efficiencies.

Do not make photocopies of the PTVSC. There are specific parameters to the layout of the checklist which must be precise in order for it to be scanned properly. If you need more copies of the PTVSC contact Jack Harrington (c. 774-200-1502) for the request or print the form directly from NEFSC Fisheries Sampling Branch website (<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/fsb/>).

Below is a list of mandatory guidelines for filling out the PTVSC:

- DO NOT make any markings or notes outside of the designated areas on the front of the PTVSC. If you have comments, record them in the appropriate box on the back in the comments section.
- ONLY make comments regarding legitimate safety and stability concerns or an explanation as to why a field was left blank.
- DO NOT put slashes (/) or dashes (-) between the boxes when recording any of the expiration dates.
- All equipment expiration dates are to be recorded in the MM/YY format (2 digit month and 2 digit year).
- If for some reason you cannot obtain an expiration date or can only obtain a portion of the expiration date, leave the boxes blank.



- If any of the equipment expiration dates are blank, you MUST comment as to why on the back of the sheet.
- If the life raft or EPIRB on the vessel does not have a hydrostatic release (e.g. “float free” life raft), record “0000” in the expiration date fields and comment on the back of the sheet.
- All recorded information should be written clearly and as dark as possible.
- Consistent errors or failure to correctly fill out the PTVSC will negatively effect your bonus scoring.

Obtaining expiration dates for the EPIRB and life raft:

- If a Category I EPIRB is contained in a housing unit (Figure 1), you MUST ask the captain or a qualified crew member to remove the housing in order for you to verify the presence of the EPIRB and to obtain the hydrostatic release and battery expiration dates.
- The captain or qualified crew member may also need to unlatch the EPRIB itself as the battery expiration date may be located on the back of the unit and should not be confused with the NOAA registration date.
- There are some older models of a Category I EPIRB that are attached with a mounting bracket (Figure 2) in which the hydrostatic release is located behind the bracket.
 - In this case, paperwork noting the hydrostatic expiration date (e.g. USCG documentation) or that the hydrostatic release is less than 2 years old (e.g. purchase receipt) will suffice. Otherwise, the mounting bracket will need to be removed by the captain or a qualified crew member to verify the expiration date.
 - The EPIRB may still need to be unlatched to check the battery expiration date, which should not be confused with the NOAA registration date.
- EPIRBs that are considered a Category II (Figure 3) are manually activated and do not have a hydrostatic release. Category II EPIRBs are only approved for vessels less than 36’.
- Life rafts that are considered “float free” will have a weak link, indicated by a red sting or thin wire (Figure 4), instead of a hydrostatic release. The weak link will be securely attached to the deck or cradle on one end and to the painter on the other end. The weak link has an expiration date; however, the attached tag with the expiration date is not very rugged and often falls off.
- The cradle of a float free raft is typically higher than a life raft cradle with a hydrostatic release (Figure 5).
 - Note: There will be NO straps holding the raft in place on a float free raft.

For your safety, and the safety of others, it is imperative that you record the correct expiration dates for safety equipment. Safety decal and equipment expiration dates will be closely monitored in order to maintain consistency of accurate data recording for individual vessels on observed trips.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mike Tork at 508-495-2339, Mike.Tork@noaa.gov or Lauren Marcinkiewicz at 508-495-2212, Lauren.Marcinkiewicz@noaa.gov.



Thank you.



Figure 1. A Category I EPIRB enclosed in a housing unit.



Figure 2. Examples of a Category I EPIRB with mounting bracket. The hydrostatic release is located behind bracket.



Figure 3. A Category II EPIRB, no hydrostatic release.



Figure 4. A wire version of a weak link on a float free life raft.



Figure 5. Float free life raft and cradle.