



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

December 16, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: A.I.S., Inc.,
East West Technical Services,
Fathom Research LLC, and
MRAG Americas
At-Sea Monitors, Industry Funded Scallop Observers, and
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Martins 
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

SUBJECT: Late Trip Submission Policy [update to Memo 13-003]

This memo represents an update to the existing Late Trip Submission Policy. The changes are:

- Electronic data for all trips are due within 48 hours of landing
 - Previous memo had IFS listed as 24 hours
- Paper logs for all trips are due within 4 business days of date land
 - Previously NEFOP and ASM trips were due in 5 calendar days
- Priority status is invoked after a single trip's paper logs arrive more than 6 business days after landing
 - Previous definition was 7 calendar days

The trip deadlines were updated in the NEFOP Contract and observers were notified via email on October 30, 2015. The updates to this policy reflect those changes, as well as modifying the priority status criteria to use business days instead of calendar days. These changes ensure consistency between observer programs and ease of tracking for all parties.

Attachment: Late Trip Submission Policy

NEFSC Fisheries Sampling Branch Policies
Late Trip Submission Policy

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) collects, maintains, and distributes data for scientific and management purposes in the northwest Atlantic. FSB manages three separate but related observer programs: the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP), the Industry Funded Scallop (IFS) Observer Program, and the At Sea Monitoring (ASM) Program. Here, "observers" refers to any observer/monitor working for the FSB.

All FSB observers are required to submit their trip data in a timely manner, specified in the program contract and/or regulations. Trip data includes paper data logs, biological samples, Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist, electronic data, and any digital photographs or film.

NEFOP, ASM, and IFS trips

Trip data shall be received from observers at the conclusion of each deployment and transmitted electronically, using NMFS-supplied equipment, to NMFS within 48 hours of the completion of the trip. Paper worksheets must be received at NMFS with 4 business days of the trip landing. [Paraphrased from NEFOP and ASM contracts, and IFS regulations]

Trips should never be submitted late. Although most observers uphold this standard, there have been some problems with late submissions, which have resulted in pre-mature closures of fisheries. Late trips disrupt the data processing deadlines and hold up or confound fisheries management decisions. If an observer submits late data, according to the following criteria, they will be placed on priority status:

- 3 trips in a row are late (electronic, paper, and/or biological samples), OR
- 5 of the last 10 trips are late (electronic, paper, and/or biological samples), OR
- a single trip's electronic data uploaded more than 72 hours after landing, OR
- a single trip's paper logs arrive more than 6 business days after landing, OR
- a single trip's biological samples arrive 14 days or more after landing

FSB may approve exceptions for excused lateness or trips that arrive late due to unforeseen mailing/shipping problems. Observers can request an extension via their provider. Extensions or excused lateness are granted by the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) or IFS Liaison. However, an observer with history of late trips with multiple excuses may also be considered for priority status. The FSB Data Quality Monitoring and Improvement Measures document provides details on priority and probation policies, as well as consequences for lack of improvement.