



Volume 3-2, March 2003

## **A New Look for the Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Program**

By Marie M. Scholle, DVC-MV

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It has always been the mission of the CFVS program to do what it takes to ensure that our commercial fishing fleet returns safely to its homeports. Our examiners have traveled many miles, sometimes late at night, or on a moments notice, to examine a fishing boat before it left port, trying to accommodate the fishing captain's schedule. Then, of course, there are the re-inspections that need to be done so a fishing vessel can obtain that "special" decal declaring it fit for safety on the open sea.

### **Behind the scenes-the "Gold Side"**

The examiners are the Auxiliaries in the public eye working with the fishing community and walking the docks. They have a strong support staff, from the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary to help them complete their assigned task.

Planning and funding for the Program are handled at Headquarters level. Next, are two area coordinators for the Program nation-wide. They work with all the District CFVS coordinators on funding issues. The District Coordinators manage the CFVS program on a state and regional level. The Auxiliary CFVS Branch Chiefs work closely with them to develop training strategies and work schedules. The

MSOs work directly with the Auxiliary examiners. It is at this level that examiners receive the necessary supplies to perform their inspections, and it is where the fishing examinations are returned for entry into MSLE, the Coast Guard's database. Travel orders and equipment issues are addressed at the MSOs – from whom we receive continuous support.

### **The "Silver Side"**

In parallel with "the gold side", the Auxiliary also has its own unique structure. The Chief of the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Department (DC-M) oversees all Auxiliary Marine Safety functions, to include the CFVS program. The DC-M works directly with Headquarters to secure the necessary funding for our program and works closely with the Department's staff to ensure that the Marine Safety needs of the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary are met.

The Division Chief (DVC-MV) for the CFVS program works directly under DC-M. That is my job. It is the Division Chief's responsibility to ensure that the program runs smoothly and that the needs of the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary are met. I work very closely with the District Coordinators and the

Branch Chiefs to maintain continuity throughout the program. Although regions may differ in the approaches used to complete the CFVS tasks, all examiners adhere to the same standards.

The six Branch Chiefs throughout the United States, each in charge of a designated region, work directly with the Division Chief. All our Branch Chiefs are examiners themselves, and do an outstanding job supporting the CFVS examiners in their regions. Whenever an examiner has a question or problem, it is the Branch Chief who is there to help him. Branch Chiefs also monitor the statistics used to measure the success of our program.

Our shining stars are the CFVS Examiners. The reality is that the Commercial Vessel Safety Program is a very demanding one with a special group of people involved. I look to our examiners as "professionals" in the commercial fishing industry. They are required to have extensive knowledge of the federal regulations, to have the expertise to recognize hazards on commercial fishing vessels and the ability to work with "fishermen" - a very close-knit group of businessmen who require a person to "prove" himself before they will let him on their boats. The reward for the examiner is to see a

fishing boat with his/her sticker on it coming home safely. When you see an examiner on the docks, take a few minutes to chat. They are a wealth of information.

### **Looking Forward to 2003**

This year will be a great year for the Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Program. As the Coast Guard's missions are being re-focused, the Auxiliary will be asked to "step up to the plate" and work harder than before. Our program is up to the challenge. We are looking at regional "C" schools to train our examiners as well as securing more billets at Yorktown for Auxiliarists in the CFVS School. We, as a Division, will be doing our own "housecleaning", taking care of the paperwork, ensuring the examiners are properly reporting their exams to the Auxiliary's information system, AUXDATA. At the end of the day, the examiners will receive the recognition they deserve, the fishing industry will have the best examiners in the Auxiliary and we will continue as a valued participant in the Marine Safety Program. If you want to be a part of our team, contact the DSO-MS in your District for information, or contact the Branch Chief in your region. If, for some reason, you cannot connect with those individuals, contact me. I will show you the way!

#### Need to contact the "M" Department?

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