

Overview of Injuries and Fatalities in the Fishing Industry

- Comparing the years 2007-2010, 41 people died across the country in workplace incidents at sea. During that same time period, using the same definition as used in the Transportation Safety Board report, 19 people died fishing in Nova Scotia – meaning this province had just under half of the country's fishing fatalities.
- Overall, including chronic deaths, there have been 26 fatalities in Nova Scotia's fishing sector in the last five years. (A chronic fatality is one that occurs as a result of industrial disease or medical condition.)
- The majority of fatalities in the fishing industry are drownings.
- Most fatalities occur less than 50 kms from shore, and trap-based industries like lobster and crab, which are common in Nova Scotia, have the highest fatality counts.
- WCB statistics show that 0.831 workers per 1000 died while on the job in the fishing industry. All other industries show 0.044 worker fatalities per 1000 workers. This represents a 19 times higher risk of dying while at work in the fishing sector than in any other industry.
- Fishing also has one of the highest injury rates overall in Nova Scotia. 3.81 of every 100 workers in the industry suffer a time-loss injury – nearly double the overall injury rate. In 2011, 330 people were hurt on the job in the sector and of those, 135 were serious injuries that resulted in time lost from work.
- In the past five years, there have been over 1,750 injuries reported in the fishing industry with over 650 resulting in time lost from the job.
- It's important to note that these stats reflect only WCB-covered operations. Because many fishing operations are smaller, and coverage is not mandatory, not all injuries or fatalities would appear in WCB statistics.
- The premiums paid by fishing industry employers for workplace injury insurance are among the highest in Nova Scotia. The 2012 rate for fishing is \$7.85 per \$100 of payroll, up from \$7.50 in 2011. That's well above Nova Scotia's average assessment rate of \$2.65 – a direct result of the number and severity of injuries in the fishing sector.

Common and Serious Injuries in the Fishing Industry

- **Musculoskeletal injuries** - Fishing is hard work. Heavy lifts are common, and safe lifting practices are important to prevent injury.
- **Slips and falls aboard a vessel** - Wet, slippery surfaces are a constant hazard. Fish slime and other debris add to slippery surfaces.
- **Cuts and lacerations** - Knives and other equipment such as hooks have sharp edges or points. Cuts and puncture wounds are also common when handling lobster and fish with sharp teeth and fins.

- **Falling overboard** - Falling or being pulled overboard is a real risk aboard fishing vessels, often with tragic consequences.
- **Confined space** - Depleted oxygen levels can create serious risk in compartments, hulls, engine rooms. Training and safe work practices are critical.

Fishing Safety Background Information

Common Fishing Hazards and suggested Fixes:

Hazard	Danger	Precaution
Open water and weather conditions	Risk of going overboard, drowning, vessel capsizing or other emergency at sea	Wear floatation devices when working on deck. Monitor weather and act accordingly. Know evacuation and emergency procedures. Ensure all but operator stays clear of nets, traps and winch during setting.
Lifting, twisting, other hard work	Back strain, shoulder strain, other musculoskeletal injury	Get help with heavy loads. Get as close as possible to the object, lift with the power coming from your legs. Avoid twisting your body – keep the “nose between the toes.”
Repetitive strain (Repeatedly bending at waist, motion of wrists, shoulders, etc.)	Cumulative soft tissue injury (carpal tunnel, other kinds of strains from cutting or shucking at sea)	Exercise or stretch before starting work. Encourage breaks and stretching.
Fatigue	Improper rest due to cramped sleeping quarters or rough seas.	Bring only required personal items aboard. Be considerate of other crew members trying to rest.
Hoists, lifts, derricks	Load falls off or hits someone	Inspect equipment regularly. Use a spotter. Always check area for people before moving load, stay clear of load. Ensure emergency shutoff is within reach.
Sharp edges: Knives, shells, fins, debris, rocks	Cuts and lacerations in shucking scallops, other cutting and baiting, or otherwise on board a vessel	Wear gloves when appropriate. Use caution in scallop shucking and sorting catch.
Slippery or dangerous surfaces, often compounded by rolling seas	Falling – into fish holds, overboard, down stairs or simply on floor	Wear proper footwear. Ensure clean-up of spills, fish slime, guts, etc. happens as soon as possible.

Air quality, fumes, explosive atmosphere	Oxygen deprivation in hulls and below deck, gas in engine rooms, carbon monoxide, Freon, ammonia, etc.; possible explosion or fire	Enter confined spaces only with the right training and equipment. If you notice a smell, leave immediately and report it.
Cold temperatures	Freezing, hypothermia, frostbite	Wear proper clothing. Have first aid and survival suits accessible. Monitor weather forecasts. Work in pairs.
High temperatures and hot surfaces	Burns in engine rooms, exposure to sun and heat	Wear appropriate PPE in engine rooms.
Rolling seas, confined spaces, posts, beams, etc.	Hitting head or other body parts can cause serious injury	Personal protective equipment is critical – footwear, protective hardhats or helmets.