

NL-FHSA SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

Brenda Greenslade, NL-FHSA Executive Director

On Wednesday, November 7th, 2018, the Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvester Safety Association (NL-FHSA) held its annual Safety Symposium/Trade Show and General Meeting at the Quality Hotel and Suites in Gander, Newfoundland. This was the 3rd year for the Symposium which was entitled Navigating Risk. A total of 120 people registered for the event, which included over 80 fish harvesters, both owner/operators and crew members.

As part of the Annual General Meeting, Mark Dolomount of the Professional Fish Harvester Certification Board (PFHCB) and Brenda Greenslade of the NL-FHSA provided an update on the NL-FHSA activities over the past year. Jonathan Allen representing Marine Safety from Transport Canada as well as Craig Allen from ServiceNL's Occupational Health and Safety Division provided updates on regulatory and enforcement activities.

Brian Delaney of Workplace NL gave an overview of injuries in the fish harvesting industry and reasons to be safe and stay safe. In keeping with the theme Navigating Risk, there was a personal testimony by Captain Byron Oxford on the importance of being prepared to face the dangers when working at sea as well as a joint presentation by Edgar McGuinness and Rob Brown on personal locator beacon technology and personal floatation devices.

In addition, researchers from SafetyNet (Barb Neiss,



The Atlantic Charger during a storm in Frobisher Bay

Lorenzo Moro, Giorgio Burella, James Shewmake, Bryan Davis) and Devon Telford from Environment Canada spoke on specific hazards inherent in the fishing industry including stability, noise and weather. Highlights of some of the presentations are included here.

MASTER OF THE ATLANTIC CHARGER - BYRON OXFORD

Captain Byron Oxford, gave the keynote address informing participants about his harrowing ordeal as Master of the Atlantic Charger and that of his crew in the 'tragedy that almost was' when the vessel sank on September 21, 2015 in Frobisher Bay during a powerful storm. Byron's emotional story of survival against the odds, captivated the most seasoned fish harvesters in the audience and novices alike. His inspiring story outlined the importance of emergency preparedness in the fish harvesting industry.

When an incident occurs it usually escalates quickly which can result in panic and uncoordinated efforts. By assigning emergency duties to all of his crew prior to leaving port, Byron ensured that everyone had a task to complete should an emergency arise. When the Atlantic Charger began taking on water, Byron had the workers don their survival suits, and then execute the emergency procedures he had laid out. This coordinated effort allowed the crew to leave the vessel with all workers in survival suits, a mayday call including their location relayed to the coast guard, and a life raft inflated and ready for occupancy. While waiting for rescue, the crew kept each other calm and warm, and entertained each other to boost morale.

Despite the challenges they encountered, by looking out for each other and trusting their training and preparedness, every member of the Atlantic Charger's crew made it home to their families. This is a testament to the value of training and preparation, a point which was driven home with every person in the room during Byron's speech.

PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICES

Edgar McGuinness, a Marine Safety Researcher with SafetyNet, a research group at Memorial University which is partially funded by the NL-FHSA, spoke to the importance of Personal Floatation Device (PFD)



Captain Byron Oxford speaking at the NL-FHSA Safety Symposium

use in the fish harvesting industry. He highlighted the difference between bulky PFDs that are often stowed away until they're needed and PFDs that are comfortable and low profile which can be worn while you work. A point he really drove home was how clothing affects buoyancy when you enter the water unexpectedly without your PFD. Some key points from his presentation are as follows:

- Everything you are wearing becomes an anchor pulling you down as it becomes saturated: Boots, jeans, jackets, etc.
- Your weight and drag increases and mobility decreases, so even if you can swim you are having to fight harder to stay afloat
- The energy that is expended in your arms and legs, draws blood away from your core, causing your organs to cool more rapidly
- The struggle just to stay afloat speeds up cold shock onset and the shutdown of bodily and mental functions (2-3 minutes)
- You suffer swimming failure as your body shuts down (3-15 minutes)
- You are not in the water long enough to reduce core temperature to hypothermic levels before you drown
- The short time in which this occurs without a PFD can mean the difference between drowning or wearing a PFD and being pulled out of the water cold, but alive.

When you're wearing a PFD:

- Not having to fight to stay afloat frees the body from expending further energy and the mind from panic
- The floatation applied close to the chest helps maintain core temperature
- Even if you do lose consciousness, you are floating, visible and can be rescued
- You have a strong chance at survival, without it you may have no chance at all

PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACONS

Following the presentation on PFDs, Marine Institute Ocean Safety Researcher, Robert Brown, spoke about his research around Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) and their importance in the fish harvesting industry. Much like a PFD, a PLB must be worn at all times in order to assist with survival during accidents resulting in sudden immersion. Robert outlined the need for an understanding of how the equipment works before occurrence. This can be achieved through training and regular practice through emergency drills.

His research has shown an upward trend in PLB use and a similar upward trend in the number of people being rescued at sea, indicating that these devices do save lives. He outlined the different ranges and applications for each type of PLB, as well as some of the limitations of each product. His findings regarding range can be found below:

According to the evaluations completed by participants at the Safety Symposium/Trade Show, overall the information provided was relevant and of interest to fish harvesters. Taking into consideration the location, presentations, organization, speakers and schedules, the event as a whole was highly rated. Participants indicated the trade show exhibits were relevant to their industry and would recommend next year's Safety Symposium to their friends and co-workers in the fish harvesting industry.

Topics recommended for future events included personal stories that each listener can relate to and learn from, discussions on how hypothermia occurs and how it is much more survivable now with research and understanding, and new vest and suit floatation devices. This feedback will be used in planning the NL-FHSA's fourth annual Safety Symposium to be held in 2019.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES LEGISLATION FOR WORKERS AFFECTED BY PTSD



On December 4, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced progressive legislation to protect workers who are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their employment.

“Unions in our province have been fighting for better mental health coverage for workers, and today’s announcement is an important step in addressing mental health in our province. Traumatic events can happen in all types of workplaces, and this legislation will provide a better process to ensure those affected will be covered,” said FFAW-Unifor President Keith Sullivan.

Currently, coverage for mental health illness under workers compensation are diagnosed on a case-by-case basis. This new legislation aims to make the process easier for injured workers to receive the compensation they need.

The coverage will extend to all employees covered under the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act and comes into effect July 1, 2019.

NL-FHSA SEEKS FUNDING FROM THE ATLANTIC FISHERIES FUND FOR ‘BRINGING FISH HARVESTERS SAFELY HOME’ PROGRAM PROMOTING, IN PART, THE USE OF PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACONS

The Newfoundland and Labrador Fish Harvesting Safety Association (NL-FHSA) is seeking funding from the Atlantic Fisheries Fund to support a portion of its ‘Bringing Fish Harvesters Safely Home’ program.

This is a collaborative initiative by the NL-FHSA and the Professional Fish Harvester Certification Board (PFHCB).

If the NL-FHSA is successful with this proposal, funding will be used in three ways. First, is the promotion of the ‘Bringing Fish Harvesters Safely Home’ campaign. Second, is the purchase of PLBs for eligible fish harvesters and third, is distribution and training on PLBs.

Despite improvements in safety, loss of life in the fishing industry continues to be a problem. Most fatalities are caused by drowning or exposure/hypothermia following falls overboard or abandonment. Moreover, the majority of small fishing vessels are not properly equipped with reliable distress signalling technology/devices. The Transportation Safety Board (TSB) have reported that in most cases where there is loss of life involving a small fishing vessel, there is rarely, if ever, a distress signal.

However, there are numerous documented cases where a distress signal would have reduced search and rescue (SAR) response time and potentially

NL-FHSA SEEKS FUNDING FROM THE ATLANTIC FISHERIES FUND FOR 'BRINGING FISH HARVESTERS SAFELY HOME' PROGRAM PROMOTING, IN PART, THE USE OF PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACONS CONTINUED

saved lives. The NL-FHSA believes this is a problem worth solving.

PLBs capable of transmitting on both 406MHz and 121.5MHz frequency with Global Positioning System (GPS) are now available and can address the gap that currently exists in distress signalling in the fish harvesting industry. PLBs provide an added level of personal distress signalling ability for vessels fitted with 406MHz emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), a secondary level of distress signalling for the vessel/crew, as well as homing ability in the case of falls overboard or abandonment. This technology also provides a reliable means of transmitting distress signals for fish harvesters on small fishing vessels especially when worn with a PFD.

The NL-FHSA is already working to promote PFD compliance among fish harvesters through its 'Bringing Fish Harvesters Safely Home' program. Using a simple, proactive solution, the Association proposes to address

the safety gap that currently exists in the industry concerning reliable distress signalling by capitalizing on the recent advances made in PLB technology and engage with fish harvesters on the adoption of PFDs and PLBs as a form of personal protective equipment.

Integrating the adoption of PLBs together with PFDs as an industry best practice will advance compliance among fish harvesters and result in more reliable distress signalling in critical situations, ultimately saving lives. In addition to saving lives, this practice will improve SAR and recovery efforts and result in more efficient and cost-effective SAR response by the industry and government. This best practice will also have a positive impact on the immeasurable, indirect human costs when fish harvesters are hurt or fatally wounded at sea as well as help to alleviate the emotional toil and mental anguish experienced by the surviving crew, the harvester's family members and the community at large.



WELCOME COREY COOPER

Corey Cooper has joined the NL-FHSA team as a Health & Safety Coordinator.

Born and raised in St. John's, Corey worked most recently as an independent safety advisor for construction contractors, providing health and safety consultation for projects throughout Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Memorial University and a Diploma in Health & Safety Engineering from the College of the North Atlantic. He will be helping to provide fish harvesters with the skills and information needed to reduce risk and improve the overall safety culture of the industry. Outside of his work life, Corey can usually be found tinkering on projects in his garage or renovating his old house.