

# STATE OF ALASKA HEALTH MANDATE 017 PROVIDES PROCEDURES AND DIRECTIVES FOR INDEPENDENT FISHING VESSELS

On April 23, 2020, the State of Alaska issued Health Mandate 017, which provides guidance for independent fishing vessels operating in Alaska during the 2020 season. The purpose of the mandate is to enact standardized protective measures for independent commercial fishing vessels operating in Alaska waters and ports to prevent, slow or disrupt the COVID-19 virus. Mandate 017 defines “independent commercial fishing vessels” as “catcher and tender vessels that have not agreed to operate under a fleet-wide plan submitted by a company, association, or entity that represents a fleet of vessels.” This definition applies to most ALFA member vessels.

The Mandate does not apply to skiffs operating from shore. The State of Alaska will be preparing specific guidance for commercial fisheries operating from skiffs over the next week, advises skiff fishermen operating in the meantime to operate using guidelines for charter fisheries and remote lodges available here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/0425-COVID-MANDATE-016-Attachment-J-Fishing-Charters.pdf>; <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/0425-COVID-MANDATE-016-Attachment-L-Lodging-and-Overnight-Camping.pdf>.

You can read Health Mandate 017, access required forms, and review other state of Alaska health mandates at the following link: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-mandates/>. *All fishermen will need to review and carry Appendix 01 and Appendix 02 to Health Mandate 017.* Appendix 01 is the “Alaska Protective Plan for Independent Commercial Fishing Vessels” and has seven specific sections that cover documents, travel procedures, and protective and screening measures and directives for use on-board the vessel and at port. Independent commercial fishing vessels must enact Appendix 01 protective measures and procedures, and other controls as necessary to ensure crew member compliance. This plan replaces the need to develop a Community/Workforce Protective Plan under Health Mandates 010 and 012. The following discussion is only a summary of Protective Plan requirements – vessel captains must review, carry and comply with the more specific directions provided in the state Plan.

## DOCUMENTATION

Mandate 017 first requires that all independent fishing vessels must carry an “Independent Fishing Vessel Protective Measures Acknowledgement Form” acknowledging and agreeing to comply with Appendix 01 to Mandate 17. That form is available at: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/COVID-MANDATE-017-Appendix-02-Acknowledgement-Form.pdf>. Fishermen must retain the form and any other required documentation under the mandate and Appendix 01 for the duration of the 2020 fishing season. The form must be available to present to seafood purchasing agents, and federal, state and local authorities, including law enforcement and fisheries regulators. *Additionally, vessel captains must maintain a ship’s log or other electronic document certifying crew screening, quarantining and on-board procedures taken should any crew member become ill.*

## TRAVEL PROCEDURES, SELF-QUARANTINING AND SCREENING

*Crew arriving via airplane will need to wear cloth face coverings, carry documentation showing that they are a “Critical Infrastructure Worker” and, upon arrival in an Alaska port, proceed*

directly to their self-quarantine location, whether on board the vessel, hotel room, or other location.

Crew or captains arriving from out of state must self-quarantine for 14 days. The Protective Plan provides nine additional directives for self-quarantining, including procedures for when crew are living on-shore, when new crew arrive at the vessel and accounting for transit time from out-of-state ports. Captains must interview crew with a series of health-related questions and ensure that crew are free of symptoms prior to allowing them to board the vessel. Importantly, vessels must fly a “Lima” flag when any quarantining crew are on board and have thermometers available as part of the physical screening process.

## **PROCEDURES IN PORT**

Once self-quarantining is complete, the Protective Plan directs fishing vessel captains and crew to remain on their vessel in port except for essential purposes, such as offloads, grocery and other resupply and maintenance work. During these interactions, crew and shore-based workers must avoid face-to-face interaction. The Protective Plan recognizes that some fishermen live locally and those individuals must comply with Health Mandate 011 social distancing guidelines when returning to a local residence. If it is necessary to have a service vendor onboard the vessel, captains must conduct a screening and implement other measures specified in the Protective Plan to minimize contact between vendors and crew.

## **PROCEDURES ONBOARD A VESSEL**

The Protective Plan provides recommendations and guidelines for social distancing onboard a vessel which may vary according to size and layout. Guidelines include protocols for galley and meals, vessel sanitizing, and individual hygiene. Where practicable, captains should assign one crew member with specific galley and sanitization duties. There must be a written procedure for vessel sanitizing. The Protective Plan also provides seven specific procedures in the event that crew become ill. They must be isolated if possible on the vessel as specified in the Protective Plan. Vessels that are unable to isolate individuals must then begin a fourteen-day period of isolation. Captains must contact a public health center if a crew member becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 symptoms. In some cases, vessels with a mildly ill crew member may continue fishing and complete a fourteen-day quarantine at sea. State of Alaska officials encourage captains in this circumstance to operate within range of medical facilities in case the sick crew members condition worsens.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

The Protective Plan components such as document retention, self-quarantining and other measures are mandatory. Violations are subject to civil and potentially serious criminal penalties. The State of Alaska will not be conducting rigorous enforcement and expects commercial fishermen to comply in their own best interest. Any fleet failures to adhere to Health Mandate 017 could result in additional fishery restrictions.

Some communities will have stricter standards. The State advises commercial fishermen to comply with local community standards and work with the State to resolve conflicts.

United Fishermen of Alaska recent Health Mandate 017 webinar is accessible at:

<http://www.ufafish.org/ufa-covid-19/>.