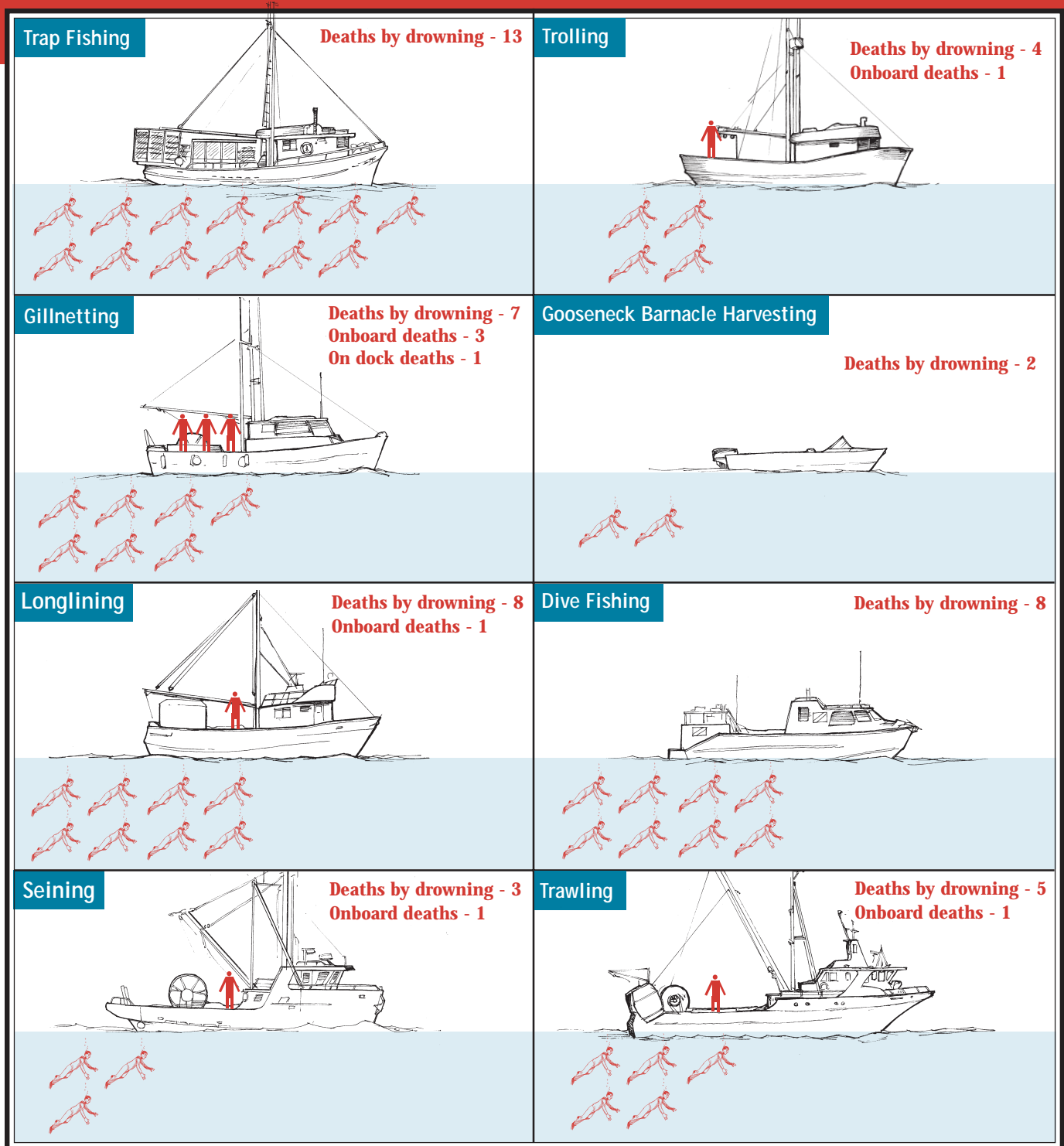
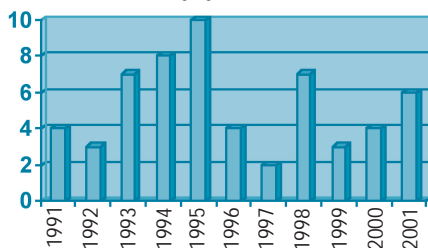


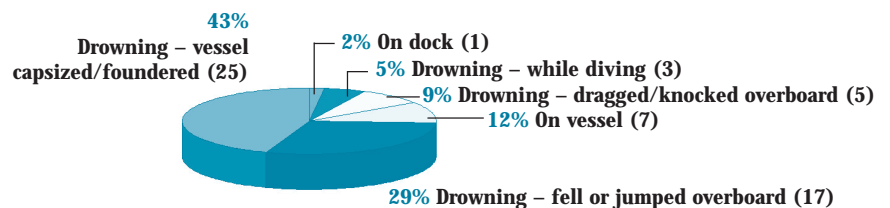
# Fish Harvesting Alert: 58 Fatalities 1991–2001



Fatalities by year, 1991–2001



Type of incident, 1991–2001



If you have questions on workplace safety, call the WCB Prevention Line at 604 276-3100 in the Lower Mainland, or toll free 1 888 621 SAFE (7233) for the rest of B.C., or visit [www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com).



[www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com)

# Drowning is the Primary Cause of Fish Harvester Deaths 1991 - 2001

**Eighty-six percent (86%) of all fish harvester fatalities were drownings. They resulted from vessels sinking, foundering, or capsizing, or from crew members falling or being knocked or dragged overboard.** These deaths did not happen by chance or from bad luck. In some cases, the seaworthiness of the vessel was questionable and in others, training and emergency response procedures were not used. Investigation of each drowning showed some degree of poor judgement.

**The first rule to live by is to keep out of the water. The second is to practice survival and rescue in case you enter the water or abandon your vessel.** Owners, masters, and crew members each have individual and shared responsibilities for vessel and crew safety. Well maintained fishing vessels operated within the vessel's capacity to respond safely relative to load, stability, and the actual and forecast weather conditions are the ones that typically come through for their owner, master, and crew season after season.

**To prevent drowning, a prudent crew member wears a personal flotation device when working on deck in areas where rail height or lifelines do not provide sufficient protection, or in heavy weather.** Modern PFDs are light, slim-lined, self-activating, and may be worn under or over foul weather gear. However, while a PFD will help prolong your life, cold water immersion will kill you if you have no way to get back on board your vessel or if rescue is not timely.

**Training and drills are essential for master and crew to respond effectively to emergencies.** You need to be prepared for catastrophies such as putting out fire on board, donning an immersion suit if the vessel takes on water, abandoning ship or recovering someone from the water. Crew who don't know their specific emergency duties and how to carry them out add to the emergency. You don't want to be in the water with your last sight being crew members yelling and screaming in panic because they don't know what to do to get you back on board. **"We were going to train and practice this" doesn't cut it when you're the victim in a real emergency.**

There is nothing new about the above information. **Most professional fish harvesters routinely maintain their vessels and equipment, and train and practice for emergencies, knowing that prevention is the only option.** Unfortunately, incident investigations show that some fish harvesters need to do much more.

For more information, please consult the following publications:

## **Gearing Up For Safety**

*(Safe Work Practices for Commercial Fishing in BC)*

Workers' Compensation Board of BC

## **Small Fishing Vessel Safety Manual**

Transport Canada

## **Survival in Cold Waters**

Transport Canada

