



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Fishing vessel stability checklist

Fishing vessel operations face a range of stability risks.

You can use this checklist to help identify stability risks and controls in your operation.

Note: This is not a full list of risks and controls. You may need to identify others while some may not apply to your operation.

Vessel modifications and new fishing gear

- ☐ Keep weight as low as possible.
- ☐ Track any weight added or removed in stability documentation (if available).
- ☐ Record modifications that may impact stability in logbook, especially windage and top weight.
- ☐ Consult an accredited marine surveyor before making modifications.

Overloading (catch or gear)

- ☐ Follow loading conditions in stability documentation.
- ☐ Avoid storing catch on deck or high up.
- ☐ Leave margin for poor weather and fuel depletion.
- ☐ Make sure there's enough freeboard.

Swamping of deck and free-surface effect

- ☐ Keep freeing ports open and clear.
- ☐ Consider operational limits in different weather conditions.
- ☐ Minimise bilge water and melted ice.
- ☐ Consider free-surface effects of fuel and ballast tanks.

Water ingress and downflooding

- ☐ Fit bilge alarms where crew can be alerted at all times, including sleeping quarters.
- ☐ Test bilge alarms and pumps before each trip.
- ☐ Keep hatches/doors closed when not in use.
- ☐ Make sure all openings are secured and clear.

Shifting catch or fishing gear

- ☐ Secure catch on centreline or balanced port/starboard.
- ☐ Use pound boards for bulk fish.
- ☐ Lash gear and pots securely to withstand wave and wind impact.

Use of stabilisers

- ☐ Stow plates/birds on deck when not in use.
- ☐ Plan operations to allow for reduced stability when raising arms.
- ☐ Maintain shackles, pins and connectors regularly.

Trawling, dredging and towing

- ☐ Keep tow point as low as possible.
- ☐ Assess sea-state and swell direction before trawling, dredging and towing.
- ☐ Avoid trawling, dredging and towing in rough conditions when heavily loaded.

Fouling or snagging gear

- ☐ Fit quick-release or weak links in tow lines.
- ☐ Stop operations and assess stability before freeing gear.
- ☐ Avoid steep tow angles and too much tension

Lifting catch or gear (stern or side)

- ☐ Minimise lifting height and load.
- ☐ Avoid lifting heavy loads in rough seas.
- ☐ Consider vessel condition and sea-state when planning lifts.

Heavy seas, breaking waves, broaching

- ☐ Assess operational weather limits.
- ☐ Steer bow into waves when possible.
- ☐ Secure all gear and catch before bad weather.
- ☐ Make decisions with awareness of stability reserves.

Fuel depletion during trip

- ☐ Plan stability for all stages of voyage.
- ☐ Monitor fuel levels and assess stability impact.
- ☐ Use inclinometer to monitor roll angles.

Trawler rigging (stays and shackles)

- ☐ Inspect, maintain and replace as required.
- ☐ Assess rigging and consider secondary forestays and shackles.