



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.