



Fishing Vessel Leif; July 6, 2005.  
Official U.S. Coast Guard photo by  
Petty Officer Chris Leibrant

From 1994 through 2004, 1,398 vessels were

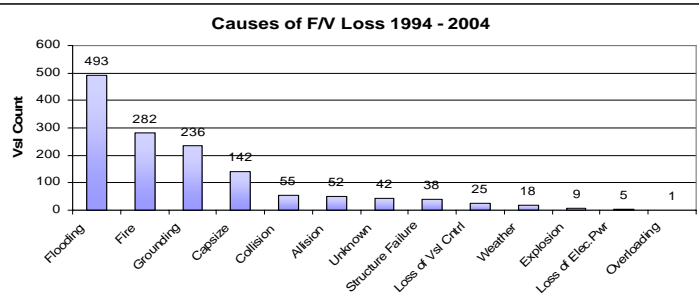
lost. Flooding was the leading contributor cause of vessel loss. Surprisingly, foul weather conditions was not the main cause of flooding situations. Failure to conduct routine preventive maintenance and safety examinations was the major factor in a third of vessel losses. This article emphasizes the importance of how routine vessel maintenance can reduce the risk of vessel flooding leading to vessel sinking in the commercial fishing industry.

## Vessel maintenance can reduce vessel risk.

Such programs include minimizing fire hazards through good housekeeping, repairing ignition sources, testing piping systems for leaks, replacing hoses before they leak, and making other timely machinery repairs. Taking precautions to prevent fires also ensures the reliability of the vessels system meaning no untimely breakdowns that waste time that can be spent fishing.

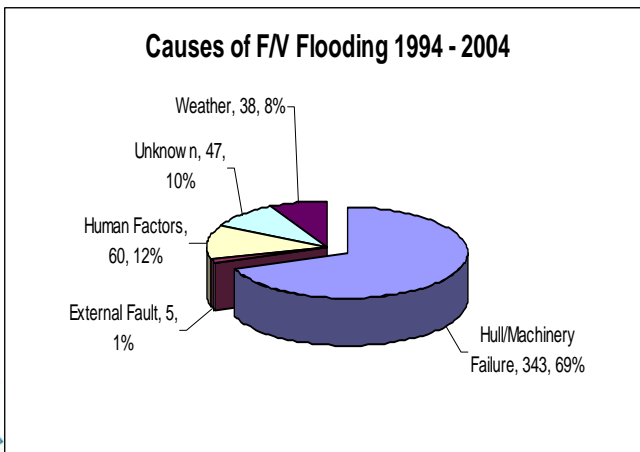
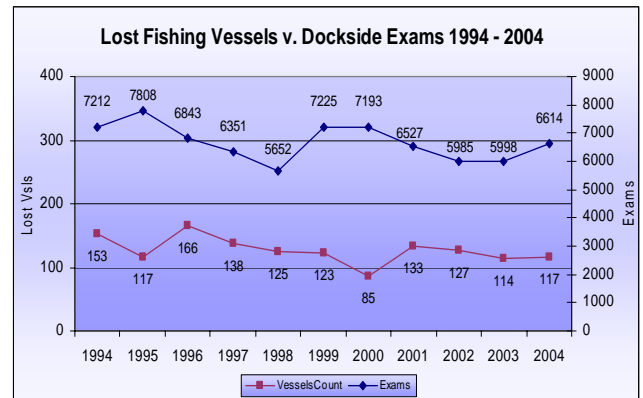
Inspection programs must also consider the major cause of vessel loss—flooding. Inspection programs must pay special attention to through hull fittings, the hull itself, corrosion and wastage or loose fasteners, inoperative high water alarms and excessive leaking through packing glands.

The Coast Guard's no-fault, voluntary dockside examination program continues to be our most effective outreach component. As supported in the graph above, there is an inverse relationship between vessel examination activity and vessels lost during a give year. How-



Flooding accounted for 35% of vessel losses throughout the eleven year review period. Hull and machinery failure accounted for 69% of the fishing vessel losses due to flooding and 25% of all losses.

In addition to flooding losses, fire accounted for 20% of vessel losses. Both flooding from hull and machinery failures and fires have something in common—most of these types of vessel loss are easily preventable. Proper inspection and testing can identify areas that can lead to fire or flooding.



ever there are other options—self inspection or marine surveyors. Smaller and less complicated vessel may be adequately examined by the operator. Larger and more complex vessels may benefit from experienced professionals who can easily spot potential problems and make recommendations for repairs and replacement.

**Preventing casualties is good business sense.** Whichever method is chosen, a Coast Guard voluntary dockside exam, a self examination, or an inspection from a marine surveyor, each will reduce the risk of vessel loss. An examination of the vessel prior leaving the dock is always time well spent. Besides promoting reliable and profitable fishing operations, the safety of the entire crew depends on vessel safely returning to port.

