

## Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC) Working Group

August 8, 2019: 10:00-11:30, 13:15-15:00  
Clarke Conference Room, Woods Hole, MA

### Abstract

The Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) has been communicating with the industry, observers, other observer programs, and various stakeholders about our current Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist protocols. Currently observers are required to complete a Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC) prior to each trip they observe. FSB received feedback and comments from internal and external stakeholders requesting that we re-examine our current process for carrying out safety checks and consider modifying if possible. As a result the FSB hosted a pre-workshop meeting on August 1<sup>st</sup> and a workshop on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to reevaluate the effectiveness of safety checklists, and to propose potential efficiencies while maintaining a high level of safety. Invitees included members of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), fishery liaisons, fishermen, staff from the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center FSB, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, observer provider companies, safety trainers, members of the NOAA National Observer Program (NOP), and sector managers. All participants provided their perspective and ideas for potential changes. FSB has been praised in a recent NOAA Headquarters Observer Safety Program Review as a model program. Any changes on safety practices should be done in consultation with safety experts to ensure that we are not compromising safety for convenience. The USCG did not express any safety concerns with the way the current PTVSC is currently being completed. Other members expressed that some fleets may be more challenging than others in terms of completing the safety checklist. All proposed changes from the workshop were carefully and thoughtfully proposed and action items have been identified. FSB is optimistic that the proposed changes will provide greater efficiency and continue to ensure the safe deployment of observers. Those changes include:

- expanding the EPIRB Visual Inspection Card (EVIC) to include the life raft;
- updating the safety checklist (improve formatting and organization);
- working with industry members and our training staff to ensure the EVIC cards are issued and utilized as much as possible;
- developing a safety reminder list for observers prior to boarding; and
- creating a mentoring program to ensure new observers are completing the safety checklist and communicating with industry well.

It is expected that these changes will occur from the fall of 2019 to the spring of 2020. With that, FSB will develop a roll out strategy that will include messaging out to key stakeholders and industry managers, sector managers, NOAA leadership, and more on the changes that were implemented to the PTVSC.

## STAFF

**Facilitator:** Amy Martins

**Process Observer:** Katherine McArdle

**Recorder:** Kara Gross

**Meeting Leader:** Ken Keene

## MORNING SESSION: BRAINSTORMING (10:00-11:30)

### 1. Introduction (Amy)

#### Meeting Rules:

- Be Brief - to the point
- Keep an open mind
- Listen without bias
- Raise hand (or send KB a chat) & be recognized before speaking
- Remain on mute but turn on microphones when speaking

“Parking Lot”: Ideas to be tabled and discussed later

A review was conducted of the basic requirements for observers to check prior to deploying (reference: NEFSC Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist)

A National Observer Safety Program Review was conducted in 2016/2017 by 4 safety experts, the results were released in the spring. Conclusion was that the safety programs for observers are robust and effective at both a national and regional level. Changing PTVSC was not one of the committee’s recommendations.

**Introductions:** 24 individuals were present either in person or via webinar. Those 24 people had a combined 440 years of experience working with observer programs and/or commercial fishing vessels.

#### *In attendance in room*

- Nichole Rossi; FSB EM Lead; observer support, dockside and portside sampling program development; 15 yrs, 10-50 boats, <100 days
- Sara Weeks; FSB NE Area Lead; observer support. 20 yrs, 10-50 boats, <100 days
- Ted Harrington; USCG Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinator D1; presents to observers during their safety training, always impressed by the level of detail and training they receive; 40 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Joe Jurek; owner/operator FV MYSTIQUE LADY, FSB Fishery Liaison; fishing industry representative; 26 yrs, <10 boats, >>100 days
- Nirel Etchart; USCG NRFTC Curriculum Writer; participates in observer training support panel; 14 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Ashley Reidy; USCG NRFTC Instructor; participates in observer training support panel; 10+ yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Lee Benaka; NOP at NOAA HQ in Silver Spring; observer support; 20 yrs, <10 boats, <10 days
- Kara Gross; FSB M-A Area Lead Assistant; observer support and safety training coordinator; 11 yrs, 10-50 boats, >100 days
- Randy Collins; FSB Data Debriefer; observer support; 12 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Jack Harrington; FSB Gear Specialist; observer support/safety team support; 20 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Rick Usher; AIS Sr Vice President; observer service provider; 35 yrs, 10-50 boats, >>100 days
- Lauren Wahl; AIS NEFOP Program Manager; observer service provider; 12 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Troy Luna; USCG Safety Coordinator D5; assist with process to facilitate improving vessel safety; 30 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Zach Fyke; FSB Observer Compliance Liaison; observer support; 2 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Kristy Gustafson; FSB NE Area Lead Assistant; observer support; 7yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Amy Martins; FSB Branch Chief; observer support, improving efficiency while maintaining

observer safety standards; 35 yrs; 10-50 boats, >100 days

- KB McArdle; FSB Groundfish Lead; observer support; 18 yrs, <10 boats, <100 days

*In attendance on phone*

- Jenna Rockwell; Fathom Resources Project Coordinator; observer provider for ASM and IFS programs, Safety Training instructor for observers and industry and NOP MSIT (contract recently awarded); 14 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days
- Libby Etrie; works for NESSN which provides organizational and technical assistance to member sectors; ~10 yrs, <10 boats, <10 days
- Dan Solerno; Sector Manager for NEFS 5 & 11; support industry; 10 yrs experience as manager and additional with observer program/Co-op
- Liz Chilton; NOP at NOAA HQ; supports and promote safety among all observers; 20+ yrs, 10-50 boats, >100 days
- Claire Fitz-Gerald; GARFO Sustainable Fisheries Division; former observer & sector manager; 10 yrs, 10-50 boats, >100 days
- Steve Pigeon; USCG Examiner in Coram, NY; was instructor at NRFTC, promote safety among industry and for observers; 30 yrs
- Ken Keene; FSB M-A Area Lead, Safety Lead; promote observer safety; 20 yrs, >50 boats, >100 days

2. **Objective:** To evaluate and produce anything we need to change to make the safety checklist more safe and efficient. Discuss if it is possible to modify current protocols while maintaining program standards, and evaluate risks and impacts to the program, resources, observers, and the industry.

3. **Presentation:** Ken Keene ([Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist Think-tank 2.0](#))

- a. Goal - maintaining safety of fisheries observers, strategize how to reduce the burden of safety checks for industry and observers, meet all regulations/requirements
- b. Review of regulations
- c. Task - complaints that repeated safety checks on single day vessels are erroneous
- d. Hurdles - complexity of multiple programs, providers and sea day selection/scheduling, human error (e.g., EVIC - issued when observer visually checks and records information on vessel EPIRB. Observers sometimes complete/issue incorrectly when there is an expired date on the EPIRB and subsequent observers use the card)
- e. Benefits - less wear and tear on equipment, improved relationship between observers and industry, improved safety of obs if equipment in unsafe location
- f. Options - expand EVIC to include other items (i.e., liferaft or flares), expand the use of USCG Exam documentation to verify expiration dates, approve a single check to be valid for an extended period of time, conduct "cluster checks" by observers for multiple vessels in a single port, captain signs an agreement stating that equipment will not be changed/altered for "X" days, regulation changes, status quo, electronic entry of PTVSC with easy photographs and audit checks when dates are expired
- g. Next steps - discuss & weigh options, update program policy, outreach, training
- h. Questions -
  - i. USCG perspective - USCG boardings find 20% of vessels have safety deficiencies but overlaid with observed trips, only 0.5% of USCG boardings with observers on board have safety violations. Was there more industry reps that have concerns with safety checks or one vocal individual?
    1. We have heard from several captains and observers that it is a burden on the industry and observers, and a difficult way to start out a trip.
  - ii. Are the violations found on the same safety checklist items?
    1. What observers are calling deficiencies are mostly what the boarding officers are finding
    2. Discrepancy could also be between boats that have and do not have observer requirements. Boats required to take observers tend to maintain their

- equipment because they'd otherwise not be able to fish (offered by industry member)
- iii. Note: most day boats are leaving during early morning hours (2-4am). These boats are the most difficult boats to complete the safety checklist on as it's dark.

#### 4. Exercise: Benefits and Challenges of completing the PTVSC fields

- a. Everyone place 3 green and 3 red dots for things that work (G) or things that are challenging (R) on the checklist. This will give us an indicator to where we should focus attention for improvements or clarifications
  - i. Things that work:
    1. Vessel Orientation
    2. USCG Decal
    3. Immersion Suits
    4. Life Rings
    5. Fire Extinguishers
  - ii. Things that need improvement:
    1. EPIRB
    2. Liferaft
    3. Emergency Flares
- b. Write on Sticky Notes things that work and things that don't work in the process of conducting a safety check
  - i. Summary of what works:
    1. Vessel orientation
    2. The actual safety check that results in the observer gaining knowledge of where all the safety items are located on the vessel
    3. Using the EVIC if filled out properly
    4. Safety Decal
  - ii. Summary of what doesn't work:
    1. Liferaft check can be hazardous when climbing on roof
    2. Doing a check daily for day boats
    3. If a problem arises it puts the observers in an uncomfortable position as the captain may assume the observer is taking on an enforcement role
    4. The make the initial interaction with the captain contentious

### LUNCH: THINKING 11:30-13:15

#### Homework: Two Readings

- Current Safety Regulations (see handout)
- Observer After Action Report (AAR), LANGLEY DOUGLAS

### AFTERNOON SESSION: ACTION PLAN 13:15-15:00

#### 5. Review the Results of the Exercise

#### 6. Case Study: AAR from F/V LANGLEY DOUGLAS

- a. USCG SAR video
- b. What stood out in debriefing was that the safety check was thorough and if not for the equipment, the result of the emergency may not have been as successful. EPIRB was installed, current and registered properly and was the only signal that the vessel was in distress. Crew and observer were well-trained and working together as a team.
- c. NOTE: USCG has added casualties with observers on board to presentation given to observer classes. In each of those cases, after investigating, the observer has been a key person in a successful rescue/. When observers are onboard, it is a safer boat.

## 7. Goals and Objectives

### Objectives

- a. Streamline safety check to reduce burden on fishermen and meet safety requirements
- b. To assess if there's anything we could change on safety check to improve safety
- c. Improve efficiency
- d. Bring diverse group of people together to share information about fishing vessel and observer safety

### Goals

- a. Reduce conflict
- b. Keep observers safe
- c. Improve relationships between fishermen and observers

## 8. Group Exercise and Brainstorming Session

- a. Format of the PTVSC and EVIC (Sara, Niki, Joe, Ted, Kristy, Zach, Troy)
  - i. PTVSC
    1. Electronic with built in audits - out of range or out of date
    2. Can auto-populate some information
    3. Or can automatically reduce fields needed in a check if a check was completed within the same month of another observer
    4. Format and visual read needs improvement
  - ii. Add liferaft and/or flares to EVIC
    1. Change time frame to 1 month or end of month instead of 90 days?
    2. Risk involved when reducing time frame? Risk of getting on roof vs risk of something being expired?
    3. Limit to vessel size/type of vessel?
    4. Limit to Day vs Multiday?
      - a. Suggestions and changes to checklist would be limited to day vessels
      - b. Define calendar vs 24 hour day
      - c. Multiday boats typically leave at more reasonable times and have more pre-sailing preparation time if expired equipment needed to be remedied. Day fleet leaves in early morning hours and doesn't have the same flexibility and frequency of trips (and tendency of back to back trips) is higher
      - d. What about vessels that do both?
    5. Categorize vessels by the way they are configured i.e., safe way to get on roof?
- b. Frequency of PTVSC (Kara, Nirel, Ashley, Lee)
  - i. Shouldn't be more than a month (or within the month)
  - ii. Not done more than once by same observer if doing back-to-back trips
  - iii. What is the burden from industry perspective?
    1. Going on roof every morning, redundancy
    2. Can be too dangerous too often
- c. Origination of Information (Lauren, Rick, Randy, Jim, Jack)
  - i. Pre-populate prior observer information into electronic safety check
    1. Concerned that too many observers will default to pre-populated values and may not validate items that might be incorrect.
    2. Tablet updates - not frequently done by observers, but might be incentive if improves safety check process
    3. Who can have access to the data?
    4. Carrying tablets while completing the check might be "sketchy"
  - ii. Use USCG documentation to verify dates?
    1. Not most - some dates are not recorded by USCG Examiners or Boarding Teams (i.e., liferaft, flares)

- iii. Liability of something being incorrect
- iv. Prioritize items on safety check
- v. Can GARFO add collection of safety equipment data from industry themselves?
  - 1. Requires regulatory change
  - 2. Observer will still need to validate where the equipment is located
- vi. Would fishermen want to sign an agreement with program that they won't switch gear within 30 days?
  - 1. 90% of the fleet would
  - 2. If the dynamic of the safety check changes, the want from industry to transfer gear between vessels might change too
- d. Observer Training and Industry outreach (Ken, Claire, Liz, Dan, Libby, Jenna, Steve)
  - i. Training
    - 1. Sensitivity training or conflict resolution training for environment during safety check
    - 2. Industry safety courses that explain what is required for the observer safety check
  - ii. Outreach
    - 1. Presentations to councils
    - 2. Word would get around to industry quickly (word of mouth) send a letter to industry, NEFSC fishery news outlets, industry fishery outlets?
      - a. Meetings won't be too productive, not much participation (industry is maxed out by engagement sessions)
      - b. Email is an effective form of communication
    - 3. Solicit more feedback from industry before making protocol changes like taking photos

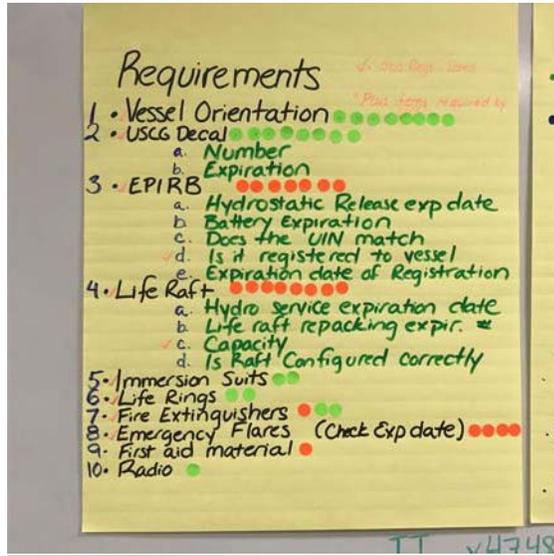
## 9. Wrap-up / Next Steps

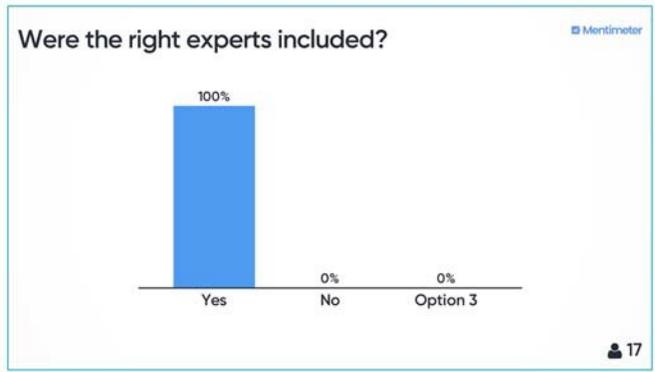
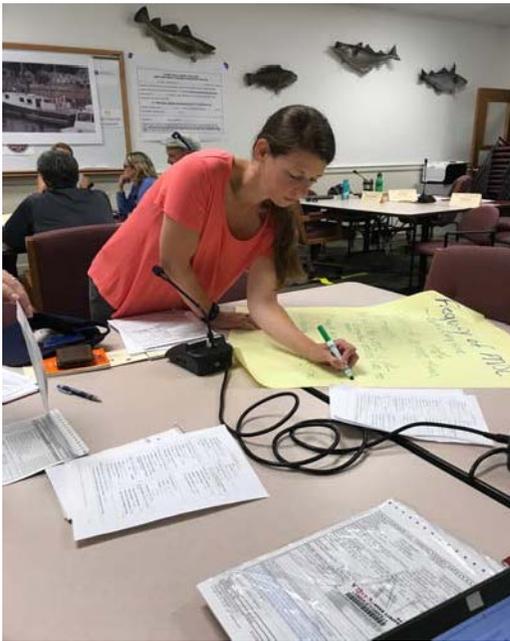
### Program To-Do's

- a. Decision Tree Development
  - i. Develop an easy to follow Decision Tree that will document minutes and action items in a visual diagram next steps
  - ii. Identify which items are ok to be left as status quo and which items need changes
    - 1. Timeline - immediate (see attached)
    - 2. Person Responsible - Randy Collins
- b. Liferaft Action Items
  - i. Develop an EVIC card for the liferaft
  - ii. Update and reformat the Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist to be less wordy
  - iii. Change the "E" in EVIC from EPIRB to Equipment to account for both the EPIRB and liferaft
  - iv. Update Office of Management and Budget (OMB) number and expiration date on new EVIC and Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist
    - 1. Timeline - early 2020
    - 2. People Responsible - Randy Collins and Ken Keene
- c. EPIRB Action Items
  - i. Increase the development of training with EVIC's in order to get them into the field more often
  - ii. Have Area Coordinator's issue EVIC's more often while doing fieldwork
  - iii. Develop a session in the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Recertification training addressing the issuing of EVIC's
  - iv. Have a report out at Seaday meetings with the providers letting them know how many EVIC's were issued for the month
  - v. Develop a webinar required to be taken by all observers
    - 1. Timeline - Fall 2019 to Spring 2020

1. People Responsible - Kara Gross and Ken Keene
- e. Flare Action Items
    - i. More emphasis on checking flares during training
    - ii. More outreach to industry
    - iii. Ensure Area Coordinators are mentioning the checking of flares more during outreach and dock work
      1. Timeline - Fall 2019
      2. People Responsible - Kara Gross and Ken Keene
  - f. General Safety Check Action Items
    - i. Develop a dock mentoring program to aid observers in completing one of their first safety checks in the most efficient manner
    - ii. Create a boarding reminder checklist that will be used as a reminder checklist for observers prior to boarding a vessel that will include safety check guidelines/tips.
      1. Timeline - Spring 2020
      2. People Responsible - Zachary Fyke, Kristy Gustafson and Randy Collins
  - g. Include risk assessment for inspecting equipment late at night or stowage that provides a potential for a fall.
    - i. Talking with the master and discussing risks is a viable way to eliminate risk and acknowledge the safety concerns of the master.
    - ii. Conflict resolution at the dock should be welcomed by all concerned parties and presents a venue for the Observer to be provided choices.
  - h. Have training highlight the importance of visually checking anything that can affect the successful launching of a raft.
    - i. Talk to observers about finding the right balance of accepting the master's word and then during daylight or other safe opportunity, check for the critical items.

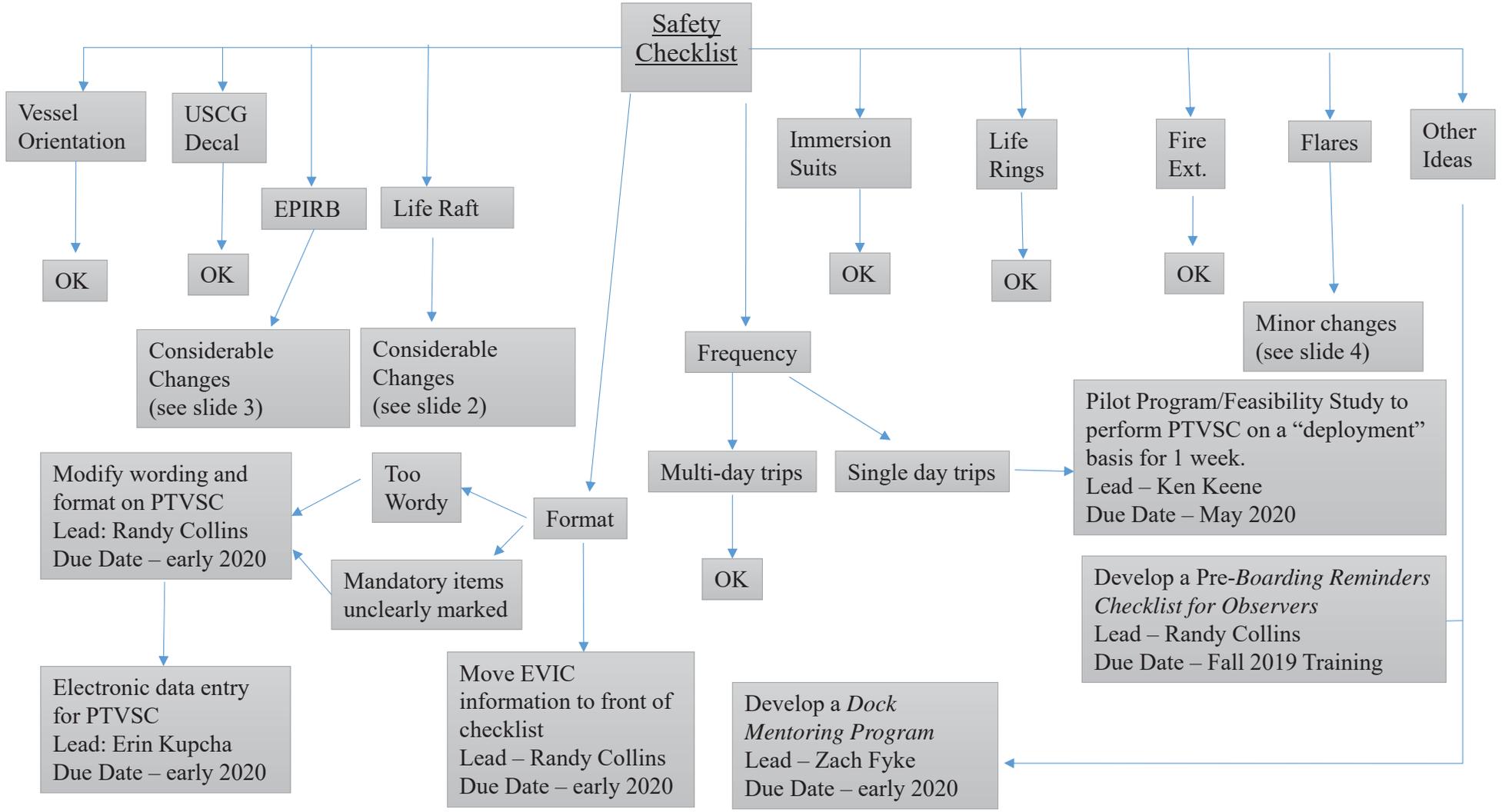
***NOTE:*** No matter which intervention is chosen a caveat will be added that the new process is for an experimental period of time to assess its effectiveness. It will also be stated that the agency reserves the right to change the process at any time if it finds that the changes present a danger to the Observers i.e. future casualties.





## DECISION TREE

### Safety Checklist Requirement Review and Associated Actions/Timelines/Lead



Life Raft

Problem: Risk of injury when going on wheelhouse

Action: Develop EVIC like card for liferaft.  
Lead – Ken Keene  
Due Date – early 2020

Action: Change EVIC title meaning to equipment.  
Lead – Ken Keene  
Due Date – early 2020

Action: Update OMB number of EVIC and Safety Checklist.  
Lead – Ken Keene/Randy Collins  
Due Date – early 2020

