



United States Department of Agriculture

Grain Inspection,
Packers and Stockyards
Administration

Federal Grain Inspection
Service

Field Management
Division

1400 Independence Ave.
SW, Stop 3630
Washington, D.C. 20250

Voice (202) 720-0228
Fax (202) 690-3951

Hotline 1-800-998-3447

www.gipsa.usda.gov

Reference #271

October 14, 2016

TO: FGIS POLICY BULLETIN BOARD

FROM: Samantha Simon, Deputy Director */s/Samantha Simon*
Field Management Division

SUBJECT: Launch Boat Safety

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Policies, Procedures, and Market Analysis Branch

1. PURPOSE

This policy memorandum communicates FGIS policy for use of launch boats for transportation to midstream ships, barges, or floating rigs.

2. BACKGROUND

FGIS is committed to protecting the safety of all employees performing official duties. One of the most potentially dangerous situations that FGIS employees encounter on the job is embarking on and disembarking from launch boats.

After a recent review of launch boat safety procedures, Field Management Division (FMD) has decided to implement a safety policy for all FGIS employees who perform work at midstream locations.

GIPSA takes seriously its responsibility to provide a workplace free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause injury or death. While there is no specific guidance on launch boat safety from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), OSHA's General Duty Clause (29 U.S.C. 654(a)(1)) requires employers to act when no other standards exist for a particular hazard. OSHA uses the following four conditions to determine if a hazardous situation violates the General Duty Clause:

1. Employees must be exposed to a hazard.
2. The hazard must be recognized by the employer.
3. The hazard must be likely to cause serious physical harm or death.
4. There must be a feasible way to correct the hazard.

FMD has determined that these four conditions have been met in the case of employees embarking on and disembarking from launch boats and has reviewed the policy to account for employee safety.

Additionally, section 6(a)(3) of FGIS Directive 9180.48 states “Stowage Examination Services,” official personnel are directed to “ensure that adequate first aid and rescue equipment is available and identify the individual responsible for maintaining this equipment so that quick access to the equipment can be made in case of an accident.”

3. POLICY

FGIS employees must not board any launch boat service to board any ships, barges, or floating rigs unless a licensed boat captain and deckhand are present on board the launch vessel. Before boarding the ship, barge, or floating rig, ensure that the deckhand is nearby and ready to provide aid in an emergency.

If the launch boat is not staffed with at least one captain and one deckhand, inform the driver that you are unable to board for safety reasons and contact your supervisor for further assistance.

Upon boarding the launch boat, familiarize yourself with the location of any lifesaving devices and request instruction from the captain or deckhand as to the proper use of such equipment.

All employees must wear U.S. Coast Guard Type I, II, III, or V PFD life vests at all times while on board the launch boat. These must be international orange in color, must contain reflective panels, and must not be of an inflatable type. If used at night, the vests must be equipped with a light and a whistle. Before putting on the life vest, inspect it for any potential defects and to ensure proper fit.

Supervisors must ensure that all employees have documented safety training, knowledge of, and understanding of all OSHA and GIPSA/FGIS safety requirements before assigning any employee to midstream work (e.g., ships, barges, floating rigs). Document all safety training for inclusion in the employee’s training record.

Field office management must ensure that all personnel who have need to utilize launch boat services read this notice.

4. QUESTIONS

Direct any questions concerning this policy to Samantha Simon, Director, FGIS Field Management Division, at (202) 720-0228 or email at Samantha.J.Simon@usda.gov.