

## Observer Safety Action Plan

Commercial fishing is one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States with a fatality rate 39 times higher than the national average. NOAA Fisheries observers are deployed on commercial fishing vessels and in processing facilities to collect data for use in stock assessments and fisheries management. Recent observer fatalities prompted NOAA Fisheries to prioritize a comprehensive review of all elements of observer safety. In late August 2016, NMFS announced its Observer Safety Action Plan which includes: 1) an observer program safety review; 2) an observer survey; and 3) improvements to observer insurance coverage.

For its Observer Program Safety Review, NMFS will contract with external observer safety experts to examine current policies and practices of NMFS national, regional, and international observer programs. This evaluation will identify gaps and recommend actions to improve safety and health standards to ensure that high quality and appropriate safety practices are being employed to effectively safeguard fisheries observers at the regional, national, and international levels (Attachment 1). The review will focus on 7 core elements: safety reporting, communications, practices/policies, training, regulations, equipment, and international. Second, NMFS is conducting an on-line survey of past and present observers to identify incentives and disincentives for remaining an observer [www.surveymonkey.com/r/JQM63FL](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JQM63FL) (Attachment 2). The survey includes questions relevant to Lead Level II observer availability. Third, a public workshop to identify improvements to observer provider insurance coverage is being planned for November 2016 in the Washington, D.C. area.



Scan QR code to take the survey.