



## **Northeast Fisheries Science Center Northeast Fisheries Observer Program**

### **Late Observer Policy for Fishermen**

The Northeast Fisheries Observer Program does not tolerate observers being late for a trip. Observers recognize this and it should be a rare occurrence that an observer would be late for a scheduled trip. Observers should not delay scheduled fishing operations. This policy has been developed to help provide guidance on what to do if a vessel thinks that an observer is late for an assigned trip.

This policy relies on communication protocols as follows:

Clear trip information is relayed directly from the captain to the observer. The observer should be given the sail date, sail time (specify am or pm), how many days the trip will be out, where the vessel is tied up, and a phone number to reach the captain.

The captain should be given the observer company name, and a phone number to reach the observer and/or program manager. As trip details may change due to weather and other unpredictable variables, it is critical that all parties work on clearly communicating trip details. Information provided via the Pre-Trip Notification System, such as time of departure, is meant to be the best estimation at the time of the notification. The final time of sail must be conveyed by establishing contact with the provider/observer before the trip deploys. If selected for observer coverage, it is important for the vessel to note which provider has been assigned to the trip, and convey the trip details clearly to the observer/program manager.

On a trip by trip basis, observer assignments will be specified for At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) or the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) observers.

#### **OBSERVER SERVICE PROVIDER PROGRAM MANAGER'S NUMBERS:**

AIS (ASM) – Lauren Wahl, 508-742-5510

AIS (NEFOP) – Gwynne Schnaittacher, 774-200-1504

EWTS (ASM) – Karl Cygler, 860-223-5165

MRAG Americas (ASM) – Greg Whritenour, 877-768-7121, 774-501-7416

Observers are strongly recommended to arrive one hour prior to the scheduled sail time, to allow sufficient time for finding where the vessel is tied up, unloading, and parking. When the captain (or his/her designee) is present, the observer may start the pre-trip safety check and find a secure area for their gear onboard. Observers should not be late for a trip.

Should the observer fail to arrive at the scheduled sail time and/or place, the vessel captain should call the program manager (listed above) to ensure that they have received the proper trip information. If the observer phone numbers are not known or they can not be reached, the captain can call the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS) Coordinator. During business hours, the number is 508-495-2309, and the after-hour cell phone number is 508-681-9104.

When calling, the vessel captain should request a status report on the observer. Please identify the vessel name, permit number, the PTNS confirmation number (if known), describe the reason for calling, and leave your name and number to be reached. During periods of high call volume, you may have to leave a voice message. For this reason, we try to reserve the cell phone for emergency situations.

Once selected for an observer, the trip may not sail without an observer unless it has been issued a written or verbal waiver. A waiver must be requested from the Observer Program. After the issue has been described and evaluated, a verbal waiver may be issued from the Branch Chief and/or PTNS Coordinator for the Observer Program. The Branch Chief and/or PTNS Coordinator will verify the selection status of the vessel and the whereabouts of the observer, and immediately call the vessel back. A follow up waiver email will be issued to the vessel via VMS. A vessel may also double check their selection status on the PTNS website: [nefsc.ptns@noaa.gov](mailto:nefsc.ptns@noaa.gov).

In summary, please ensure that the vessel has provided accurate and clear information on where and when the vessel will be leaving. If the observer has not arrived at the scheduled meeting place and time, the vessel must call NMFS (PTNS coordinator) for a verbal waiver, and then get underway. Observers with unexplained, or unacceptable reasons for being late will be put on probation and may lead to their decertification. Vessels not providing clear and accurate information for observer placement will be referred to the Office for Law Enforcement.