

ALCOHOL POLICY OF THE
NORTH PACIFIC GROUND FISH OBSERVER PROGRAM

This alcohol policy applies to certified observers and observer trainees working under the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP). Certified observers and observer trainees are covered under this policy from the first day of training or briefing until the last day of debriefing. We are concerned with the safety and performance of all trainees, observers, and those they work with. The use of alcohol can negatively affect safety and performance. Safety is a particular concern when: boarding vessels that are dockside, crossing between vessels, traveling through areas where heavy machinery is operating, etc. In these situations, alcohol consumption may significantly increase the likelihood that an injury or accident will occur.

We expect all observers to work as professional biologists. In part, this can be accomplished by completing assigned duties and abiding by the NPGOP policies, regulations, and other applicable laws. We expect individuals to use good judgement regarding alcohol and abstain from its consumption when work is involved. While on duty or returning to duty, observers should not be in possession or under the influence of alcohol to the point that it will affect their safety, the safety of others, or performance. On Duty is defined as any time an observer is:

- At a Federal facility or University of Alaska Anchorage facility for purposes related to the carrying out of their duties (e.g., training, briefing, debriefing, mid-cruise data checks, submitting data, and returning or checking out of gear)
- Aboard or boarding any commercial fishing vessel
- At any facility that processes groundfish

If an observer may be called to duty, consumption should be limited so they can function professionally if called to work. Being an observer in our program involves working independently in remote locations and we expect everyone to regulate their own activities and abide by this policy. The abuse of alcohol may contribute to a variety of issues and may lead to suspension and decertification.

Individuals in training or briefing must not be under the influence of alcohol while they are in the observer training classroom. For new trainees, alcohol consumption that affects attendance, performance, or participation may be grounds for removal and denial of certification. For certified observers attending a briefing, it may be grounds for removal from briefing, suspension, and possible decertification.

It is not our intent to monitor observer use of alcohol, however, if staff witness or become aware of a safety or performance issue they will evaluate the situation and take appropriate action. In addition, we have an obligation to inform your employer of any problems we witness.

Alcohol abuse is something that most observers are exposed to in the field. If an individual has consumed too much alcohol and cannot meet the expectations within this policy, or if they have an alcohol abuse problem, we encourage them to contact their employer to seek help. We encourage all observer providers to support employees by finding an alcohol assessment and treatment program, and helping the employee successfully complete it.

January 9, 2003