



Vessel Trip Reporting Frequently Asked Questions

If you have any fishing regulation questions, please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

If you have any questions regarding VTRs, please call the Vessel Trip Report Office at (978) 281-9246.

This guide provides a list of commonly asked questions regarding Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs). It is intended as an overview only. The complete regulations can be found at 50 CFR Part 648, under the “Fishery Regulations” section of the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office (NERO) website. For additional details on how to fill out a VTR please click this link: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/aps/evtr/doc/vtr_inst.pdf

Basic VTR Requirements

Owners and operators of federally permitted vessels possessing any of the permits listed below are **required to submit a VTR for every trip taken**, regardless of where they fish or what they catch.

Note:

Northeast multispecies	Atlantic bluefish	Spiny dogfish
Atlantic sea scallop	Atlantic herring	Summer flounder
Monkfish	Northeast skate	Scup
Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish	Tilefish	Surfclam
Black sea bass	Atlantic deep-sea red crab	Ocean quahog

If I don't fill out my VTR accurately and submit it on time, does it really affect me?

- Incomplete VTRs will be returned to you for correction.
- The renewal of your permit can be delayed if all of your required VTRs have not been received and accepted by us.
- VTRs provide critical data about fishing areas, trip length, and gear used. These data are used to support stock assessments and analyses of vessel fishing activity over time, which can impact fishery allocations.
- Dealer-reported landings, along with accurate and timely VTRs, are used to monitor quotas. Until we receive a missing VTR, we must estimate your catch for a trip.
- Effort data from VTRs (gear, chart area, number of hauls, and soak time) is used to estimate bycatch of protected species, such as harbor porpoises and sea turtles. We need accurate effort data to accurately estimate bycatch.

Submit the signed white original (NOAA Fisheries Copy) to:
NOAA Fisheries
Vessel Trip Reporting Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Permits	Frequency of Reporting	VTR Deadlines	If you did not fish...
All permits listed in block one except for those in the row below	Monthly	Must be received or postmarked by the 15th day of the month, following the month in which the trip occurred	“Did Not Fish” reports are due in accordance with the permit-specific deadlines, and may be submitted electronically up to 3 months in advance
NE Multispecies, Herring, Surf Clam & Ocean Quahog, Squid, Mackerel and Butterfish	Weekly	Must be submitted by midnight of the Tuesday following the reporting week (Sunday through Saturday) in which fish were offloaded for any trip, including trips landing other species	

Common Mistakes on VTRs that Impact Quota Monitoring and Stock Assessments

- **Multiple Chart Area Trips:** Some vessels have been filling out VTRs based solely upon where the haul back occurs; this is incorrect. If your trip encompasses multiple chart areas you must submit a VTR for each area where fishing activity takes place. In the event that tows or placement of fixed gear (gillnets, long lines, etc.) crosses chart area boundaries you must fill out a VTR for each area and apportion your catch based upon a good faith estimate. For example, if you’re a trawler and your tows go across areas 515 and 521 with 80% of your time spent in area 515 you would allocate 80% of your total catch for the tows to chart area 515 and the remaining 20% to area 521. The same basic method applies to fixed gear. If your gillnet string or long line straddles a chart area boundary you must apportion the total catch based upon what percentage of the string was in each chart area. Please contact the VTR Support Team at 978-281-9246 if you require clarification of this requirement.
- **Miscoding for a specialized gear type.** Example: VTR lists otter trawl (OTF) when actually using the Ruhl trawl (OTR) or haddock separator trawl (OHS). Specialized gears have different catch/discard rates, so it’s important to list the correct specialized gear code if you are using it.
- **Listed latitude/longitude of the fish catch does not match the chart area.** Example: A trip at 42°10’ N lat. and 70°01’ W lon. lists chart area 521 (Georges Bank), but it should list chart area 514 (Gulf of Maine).
- **Incorrect gear code listed for species fished.** Example: VTR lists shrimp otter trawl (OTS) when landing scallops in Southern New England, but it should list the scallop otter trawl (OTC). OTS is primarily used for vessels in the Gulf of Maine targeting shrimp.
- **Not sending the correct number of VTRs to reflect areas fished and gear types used.** You must submit a new VTR for each different chart area, gear type or mesh/ring size used on a trip.
- **Vessel name, permit number, and hull number do not match.**
- **Gear listed does not correspond with mesh/ring size reported.** Example: VTR lists 32” as the mesh size for a trawl cod end, when 6.5 inch mesh was actually used. We use VTR mesh size data to measure effort, gear performance, and identify fleets, be sure to properly measure and record your mesh/ring size.
- **VTR is altered after selling catch to a dealer.** See question #23 below.
- **Incorrect species code listed.** Be sure to use the VTR species code guidance at http://www.nero.noaa.gov/aps/evtr/doc/vtr_inst.pdf
- **Trawl/Dredge Tow/Soak time is incorrect.** Example: VTR incorrectly lists the tow/soak time as a “total” for the entire trip, rather than an “average” across all hauls. While using trawl or dredge gear your VTR should record the number of hauls and the average tow/soak time per haul.
- **Date sailed and date landed is incorrect.**
- **VTR is not completely filled out or is illegible.** All fields in the VTR must be filled out. Use blue or black ink only, so the VTR can be electronically scanned.
- **VTR is not signed or does not have a valid vessel operator permit number.**

Questions about when to report

1. If my vessel doesn't fish at all during a reporting period, do I still need to report?

Yes. If a vessel does not fish for an entire reporting period, a "Did Not Fish" report is required. A separate VTR is required for each reporting period. You can submit VTRs using a paper logbook or via Fish-on-Line at <https://www.nero.noaa.gov/NMFSlogin>. "Did Not Fish" reports submitted via Fish-on-Line do not need to be mailed to NOAA Fisheries. You do not need to send in a paper "Did Not Fish" report if you completed the report in Fish-on-Line.

2. What if I do not land any fish on a trip?

If a vessel does not land any fish on a trip, complete all of the trip information and enter "No Catch" in the species code name column (#17).

3. If I fish in state waters, or using my state license, do I have to submit a VTR?

Yes. If you possess a Federal permit for any species listed on page one, or are eligible to renew a limited access permit, you then have VTR requirements regardless of what license, permit, or waters you fish.

4. I only have a Federal lobster permit. What are my reporting requirements?

You have no VTR reporting requirements to NOAA Fisheries. However, your state agency may have reporting requirements.

5. I have a Federal lobster permit along with another Federal permit that is listed on page one. However, I never use that permit. What are my reporting requirements?

Since you have another Federal permit in addition to your Federal lobster permit, you must report all of your fishing activity including all of your lobster trips.

6. I hold several Federal permits. Do I have to complete more than one VTR per trip?

In most cases, a single VTR can be used to fulfill all of your reporting requirements. However, if you change your gear type, mesh/ring size, or chart area fished during that trip, then multiple VTRs are required.

7. My fishing activity is already captured through VMS. Do I need to submit a VTR?

Yes. The VMS data do not capture all the data that is required by VTRs. So, you are required to also complete a VTR.

8. Do I have to submit a VTR if I am going out just to set gear?

Yes. Vessels must submit a VTR for all trips, including trips only setting gear, trips ended because of a mechanical breakdown, and trips transiting with fish on board from one offload port to another offload port. It is important that we get VTRs from all trips, including set-only trips and trips ended early, so that we can accurately monitor catch and vessel activity.

9. Do I have to report if I take my boat out for recreational purposes only?

No. You only need to report commercial, party, or charter trips. A trip is not recreational if you sold any of your catch or accepted compensation from passengers.

10. I also report to the Southeast Regional Office of NOAA Fisheries. Do I still need to report to the Northeast office?

Yes. Our regulations require that any vessel holding a permit in the Northeast Region submit a vessel trip report to us for each trip taken regardless of location fished (e.g. Southeast Region) or species targeted (e.g. HMS). This is in addition to any other reports which may be required by the other Region or plans. The one exception to this is for vessels that are only permitted for American Lobster.

Administrative and Compliance Questions

11. I properly submitted all of my VTRs. Why are my landings wrong?

We use dealer records for official landings and consider weights reported on VTRs to be hail weights. We need both your VTR and the dealer record to match to account for where/how your fish were caught (VTR), and how much was landed (dealer record). Giving the dealer(s) a copy of your VTR will help them to report the correct VTR serial number, vessel permit number, and transaction date for the vessel that sold the catch. If the dealer uses an incorrect VTR serial number, the dealer report may not get matched to your vessel or to a specific trip.

12. Where can I check my VTRs to make sure they are submitted and filled out accurately?

It is important that you review your catch history and compare your VTRs against dealer-reported landings. You can visit Fish-on-Line to access the last 12 months of VTRs submitted and dealer-reported landings for each trip at <https://www.nero.noaa.gov/NMFSlogin>.

13. I bought my boat recently, and I got a letter stating I was missing VTRs for periods prior to my ownership. What should I do about that?

You are not responsible for reporting trips that occurred prior to your ownership. If all trips occurring under your ownership have been reported, your vessel permit will be cleared from our non-compliance list.

14. If I send in several VTRs at one time, do I have to sign and date every VTR?

Yes. All VTRs must be signed and dated, or they will be returned to you for completion.

15. My vessel engages in dayboat fishing. Why do I have to complete the date four times on a VTR?

All fields that require a date or time must be completed for the following reasons:

- The fields “**Date and Time Sailed**” and “**Date and Time Landed**” are needed to determine the length of the trip.
- **Date Sold** is used in matching VTR data to the dealer reported landings.
- **Date Signed** along with **Operator Signature** is required to certify that the information provided on the VTR is true, complete, and correct to the best of the owner/operator’s knowledge.

16. Do I need to report protected species such as marine mammals and sea turtles on my VTR?

Yes. All species caught, including all protected species, are required to be reported on the VTR. This information will be used to assess the distribution, seasonality, and level of bycatch in commercial fishing operations to better protect these species. Accurate information is important to effective management.

When an incidental mortality or injury of a marine mammal (seals, dolphins, porpoises, and whales) occurs during commercial fishing activities, you must fill out and return the Marine Mammal Authorization Program Mortality & Injury Reporting Form within 48 hours of returning from the trip on which the incident occurred. To obtain a reporting form visit: www.nero.noaa.gov/MMAP or call the Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328.

17. Do I need to report prohibited fish stocks, such as thorny skate, and ESA-listed fish, such as Atlantic sturgeon, on my VTR?

Yes. All species caught, whether kept or discarded and including all prohibited species, are required to be reported on the VTR. This information is used to help us understand the distribution, seasonality, and level of bycatch in commercial fishing operations to better manage and protect these species. Accurate information about commercial and recreational catch of these species is important for effective management measures.

18. How long do I have to keep copies of my logbook and where should it be stored?

VTRs, and any records upon which the reports were based, must be kept on board the vessel for at least 1 year and retained by the owner/operator for a total of 3 years after the date of the last entry on the report.

19. Why are there so many copies of the VTR?

The white copy of the VTR is submitted to NMFS and the yellow copy should be retained for your own records. The blue copy is for your state agency. Contact your state fisheries agency to determine if the blue copy is required. If necessary, the green or goldenrod copies may be submitted to the dealer(s) to whom you sold your catch, in order to provide the dealer with the required VTR serial number.

20. My supply of VTRs is getting low. How do I get more?

To obtain more VTRs you can use any of the following methods:

- Mail the pink renewal form contained in each logbook package to the address on page one of this document
- Visiting the Northeast Regional Office
- Contacting the Vessel Trip Reporting Office at (978) 281-9157
- Contacting your local NOAA Fisheries Field Office
- Login to Fish Online, click on 'VTR' in the upper left of the screen and then click on 'Request Logbook'.

Dealer Report Questions

21. Who can I sell my catch to?

Federally permitted vessels may only sell their catch of federally managed species to federally permitted dealers. Species that are not regulated by NOAA Fisheries may be sold elsewhere.

22. If I sell non-federally regulated species to a non-federally permitted dealer, do I still have to provide that dealer with my VTR serial number?

No. You are only required to supply the VTR serial number when selling federally managed species to a federally permitted dealer.

23. What do I need to provide to my dealer when I offload my catch?

Vessels must supply the VTR serial number to all federally permitted dealers purchasing the catch. In the instance where you have completed more than one VTR for a trip (see question 6), then the serial number from the first VTR completed should be supplied to the dealer(s). The VTR form provides two carbon copies intended to be given to the dealers by the vessel representative.

24. I had to submit more than one VTR for a trip. What serial number do I provide to the dealer?

You must provide the serial number from the first VTR used on the trip.

25. The dealer I sold my catch to made a mistake and recorded an incorrect serial number from my VTR. Can I alter the serial number on my VTR?

No. The serial number is a preprinted, unique number and is used as a control number by NOAA Fisheries. Changing or altering a serial number will result in the VTR being returned to you. To fix this problem you can either contact the dealer and have them update their records or you can contact the Data Quality team at 978-281-9348.