



Marine  
Management  
Organisation

Code of conduct:  
Fishing vessel inspections  
at sea  
(Marine Management Organisation  
and Royal Navy)

...ambitious for our seas and coasts

Marine enforcement officers (MEOs)<sup>1</sup> have a duty to carry out inspections of fishing vessels at sea to monitor compliance with Fisheries Administration legislation. Inspections at sea may be by day or night. The Marine Management Organisation undertakes to inspect vessels in a fair and professional manner and to a high standard while being courteous and, sensitive towards the needs of the fishing industry.

Boarding teams will try to minimise the amount of time that fishing operations are suspended during an inspection. Your help with many aspects of the inspection and compliance with reasonable requests made by MEOs will mean that the time spent on board is kept to a minimum. Our officers will treat you with respect and courtesy and expect the same in return.

Please ask the MEO at any time during an inspection if you are concerned with any of the procedures being followed.

It is expected that fishing vessel masters maintain proper VHF watch in accordance with good practice including the monitoring of VHF channel 16 and to respond accordingly when hailed. Masters will not be required to reveal commercially sensitive information over open VHF channels.

A boarding will not normally take place without notice unless communication cannot be established. Masters of fishing vessels will be expected to facilitate safe embarkation of boarding teams, providing a boarding ladder meeting the requirements of the regulations where necessary and providing a lee as necessary.

Boarding teams are required to assess the risk of boarding a vessel before attempting to board and this may require them asking the master of the vessel to provide a lee. They will only board a vessel when they consider it safe to do so.

MEOs will work with the Master to ensure that no action is taken that may compromise the safety of the fishing vessel and its crew. Boarding teams will have due regard to safety hazards on board fishing vessels and masters of fishing vessels should alert boarding teams to particular hazards.

Fishing vessel masters can expect a full inspection of fisheries related documentation, catch and fishing gear. A summary list is given overleaf.

MEOs will exercise their enforcement powers fairly, without discrimination and avoiding unreasonable interference with fishing activity. However, they are obliged to investigate apparent offences and should do so in a fair, impartial and professional manner. Please note that it is not the boarding officer who then decides the resultant course of action.

On completion of an inspection a MEO will aim to advise fishermen on fisheries regulations where appropriate. Ask the MEO if you need advice at the end of the inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> Marine enforcement officers can be read as British sea fishery officer (BSFO) where applicable.

The mutual courtesy and respect between the boarding team and the master and crew of the fishing vessel is an important factor in any inspection. The Marine Management Organisation will ensure that its boarding teams act courteously and will investigate any complaints in a fair and professional manner. Masters who wish to complain about the conduct of an inspection should first contact their local district marine officer of the Marine Management Organisation.

Headquarters contact:

Head of Marine Compliance  
Marine Management Organisation  
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Inspections will consist of (but are not limited to):

#### **Document checks**

- Logbook
- Licence and variations and permits
- Fishroom plan
- Certificate of Registry

#### **Fishroom**

- Assessment of catch
- Comparison with logbook
- Check weighing

#### **Gear**

All gear in use to be inspected for compliance and appropriate mesh sizes and dimensions checked and possibly some gear that is not in use.