

many of these injuries could have been prevented.”

To avoid backpack-related pain in the first place, OCA offers tips that include the following:

- ensure the weight is evenly distributed in the backpack;
- pack the heaviest items closest to the body (strain is reduced if the weight is closer to the body's centre of gravity); and,
- pack the odd-shaped items on the outside so they do not dig into the back.

Trisha Richards is a writer in Toronto.

Questions surface over vessel safety and size

By Donalee Moulton

When *Ryan's Commander* ran aground in rough seas last fall, it left two brothers dead and Ottawa scrambling to find out if federal regulations for inshore boat design are putting fishermen in danger.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada is currently investigating the incident and looking at, among other things, whether or not requirements for small boats measuring up to 65 feet contributed to the deadly accident. Boats longer than this are classified as large craft and are subject to far stricter offshore fishing requirements.

Although the regulation is not new, the fishery has changed dramatically since it first hit the books. Today, the inshore fishery extends 200 miles and fishing crews are going much farther asea than ever before — making one long-distance trip instead of several shorter tours.

To increase catch and still fall within the rules, fishermen are building their boats higher and wider, says Ian Fong, coordinator for SafeCatch, which is conducting research in Newfoundland and Labrador on fishing vessel safety as part of the SafetyNet Community Alliance for Health Research. The result, notes Dag Friis, a professor in the engineering department at Memorial University in St. John's, is that boats are less stable.

In the wake of the shrimp dragger going aground near Cape Bonivista, the captain of the *Ryan's Commander* told reporters, “We had a 45-footer before. If we'd been in that, we would have come home. The difference is the 45-footer was 12 or 14 feet out of the water and the 65-footer was 26 feet out of the water.”

Many have voiced skepticism that the federal regulations will change. Indeed, the Atlantic regional director of communications for Transport Canada says the department has already conducted a collateral investigation. “We identified no immediate threat to safety,” says Maurice Landry. “It's premature at this time,” Landry adds, “to speculate on the cause of the accident.”

It may not, however, be premature to speculate on what will happen if the length requirement remains unchanged. “My fear,” Friis says, “is we're going to lose an awful lot more lives if we don't lose this silly regulation.”

Donalee Moulton is a writer in Halifax.

Feds urged to get going on draft hours-of-service rules

By Angela Stelmakowich

The time is ripe to move forward with draft federal hours-of-service rules for commercial drivers and to strengthen compliance efforts through the mandatory use of onboard recording technology, trucking representatives say.

Proposed rules were given the green light by the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety almost two years ago. Published in the *Canada Gazette* in February of 2003, draft changes to the *Commercial Vehicle Drivers Hours of Service Regulations* set a mandatory 36-hour rest period once a commercial operation has accumulated 70 hours of driving time. Other proposed changes included reducing maximum work hours to 14 over a 24-hour period (with up to 13 hours spent driving) from the current maximum of 16 hours, and requiring a minimum off-duty rest period of 10 hours compared with the current eight-hour period.

David Bradley, CEO of the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA), says in a statement that his organization “has no quarrel with proposed new restrictions on daily/weekly driving times and a 24 per cent increase in daily rest time as compared to the existing rules.”

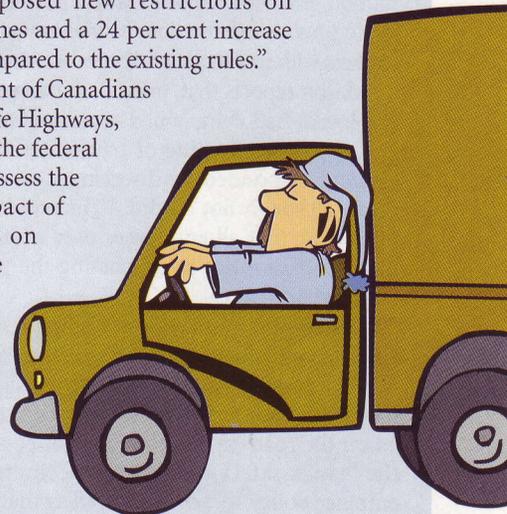
Harry Gow, president of Canadians for Responsible and Safe Highways, however, has called on the federal transport minister to assess the health and safety impact of the proposed changes on commercial vehicle operators.

But, the CTA points out, the current draft means that “a driver who is delayed while his truck is being unloaded, for example, would be required to subtract that time from his allowable total of 16 hours. CTA is concerned that this loss of productivity will cause some drivers to feel pressured to drive when they might otherwise rest in order to make up the time lost during delays.”

Electronic monitoring, for its part, should apply to all trucks governed by the *National Safety Code* and where a commercial drivers licence is required, the CTA adds.

Transport Canada, meanwhile, has issued a request for proposals on behalf of its partners in Alberta, Quebec and the United States to test a fatigue management program developed collaboratively over the past four years. Field testing is expected over the next two years, with a best practices manual to follow. ●OHS

Angela Stelmakowich is editor of OHS CANADA.



In the December issue, we failed to note that the price for the new Biosystems MultiPro four-gas monitor starts at \$575 US. We apologize for the error.

biosystems