

# Procedures to Follow While Operating Near Morro Bay or San Luis Obispo Cables

-----“Catch Fish Not Cables”-----

## PURPOSE OF THESE PROCEDURES

The following are adopted as interim procedures under the “Interim Agreement Between Cable Companies and Fishermen” operating in the Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo areas, dated July 22, 1999. Following these procedures protects a fisherman who is a signatory to the Interim Agreement from potential liability for damaging a cable under that agreement, and facilitates reimbursement for gear loss.

## SAFETY FIRST

While cable companies do not encourage trawling over submarine cables, these procedures define how vessels should behave when fishing in the vicinity of cables. These procedures do not change the vessel operator’s authority and responsibility to care for the safety of crewmembers, passengers and the vessel, taking all relevant factors into account. **No step in these procedures should be followed if doing so would be unsafe.**

## PROCEDURES WHEN OPERATING NEAR A CABLE

For purposes of these procedures, a vessel is considered “near” a cable if the distance from the vessel to the charted position of the cable is equal to or less than:

- 3 times the depth of water, in depths 150 fathoms (300 meters) or more, or
- 4 times the depth of water, in depths less than 150 fathoms (300 meters).

A vessel relying on Loran instead of GPS or DGPS should assume a potential error of \_ mile in the vessel’s position, and should consider itself “near” a cable if it is within \_ mile plus three times the depth of water of the charted position of the cable.

WHENEVER OPERATING “NEAR” A CABLE, A VESSEL MUST COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE FOLLOWING STEPS, A THROUGH G:

- A. The vessel shall have on board in useable form the most current nautical chart information including:
  - 1. The latest NOAA chart;
  - 2. Any updates from Local Notices to Mariners;
  - 3. Any updates made available by the Central California Joint Cable/Fisheries Liaison Committee (the “Committee”), such as regarding cable burial status;  
and
  - 4. Information made available by the cable companies.

*THESE PROCEDURES APPLY ONLY TO VESSELS THAT ARE SIGNATORY TO THE JULY 22, 1999 INTERIM AGREEMENT. THEY ARE APPLICABLE ONLY TO THE CABLES IN THE MORRO BAY REGION EAST OF 122°15' WEST LATITUDE. FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERIM AGREEMENT CONTACT [Xxxxxxx].*

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- B. Anyone acting as helmsman “near” a cable must understand and be able to implement these procedures.
- C. If a vessel has an electronic or video chart plotter, the route of the cable shall be displayed on the plotter screen or display. If the vessel has gear on the bottom near a cable, the plotter shall be recording the tow.
- D. When operating “near” a cable, special care should be observed. Gear should not be set or hauled up. No turns of more than 90 degrees should be used executed and no activity that lays a door over should be executed.
- E. No clam or scallop dredge, anchor, or other gear deigned to significantly penetrate the surface of the seabed should be used ‘near’ a cable. All trawl gear should be in good condition, free of elements that could snag cables.
- F. Gear should not be in contact with the bottom over any location where a cable is reported or known to be unburied.
- G. The helmsman should closely monitor the groundspeed by the most accurate means available when “near” a cable, and monitor the video plotter display for any sign of possible cable contact.

### **PROCEDURES IN CASE OF POSSIBLE CABLE CONTACT**

1. In case of any deviation from normal towing conditions the helmsman, if other than the master, should summon the master of the bridge. The master of the vessel shall take all appropriate action to keep the vessel safe and protect the cable.
2. If conditions (such as reduced speed near a cable) suggest possible cable contact, the operator should take the vessel out of gear.
3. Do not attempt to free the gear by hauling up gear or by powering up the vessel.
4. If it appears that the trawl gear is fouled on a cable, the gear should be cut away (sacrificed). In addition, the gear should be cut away if so advised after calling the contact number in paragraph 5. (For replacement of sacrificed gear, call the Committee at [XXXXXXXX], to get the phone number of the relevant cable company.)

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5. Before the leaving of the scene of a suspected cable contact, the master should call 908-234-6771 and supply all information requested.
  
6. In any case of a possible or known cable contact, the master and helmsmen should file a report with the Committee immediately upon returning to port; preserve all related records (including tow records); and cooperate with any investigation by the Committee or by the affected cable company.