

# Private Eye

## The use of approved private companies for the inspection of small fishing vessels in Norway has proved successful

**B**eing a fisher is a dangerous occupation, and being a fisher on a small fishing vessel is considered as the most dangerous occupation in Norway. The Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA) sees a need for inspection of fishing vessels to ensure safety for the vessel and the fisher, and these inspections should be related to both the structure of the vessel and to equipment on board the vessel.

Norway has a fleet of more than 6,200 fishing vessels of various sizes, from the smallest open boats of around 5 m to large trawlers up to over 100 m in length. Fishing vessels over 15 m are inspected and certified by NMA, and, since 2001, a group of around 800 fishing vessels between 10.67 m (35 ft) and 15 m, have been overseen by approved private companies on behalf of the NMA.

If the vessels fulfill the requirements, a document called “Instruction for use of the vessel” is issued. Such a document is needed to operate the vessel. Vessels under 10.67 m are currently not surveyed, but from January 2014, vessels over eight m will be included in the same regime as vessels between 10.67 and 15 m.

The number of fishing vessels in Norway makes it impossible for NMA to conduct inspections on all these vessels, and NMA has, therefore, chosen a regime with approved private companies that conduct these inspections.

There are two major requirements that need to be fulfilled to become an approved private inspector—competence and a quality system. Companies, not individual

persons, have to apply to become approved.

The minimum required competence in the approved private company is either naval architect, chief engineer, master, mate or similar position. However, some competence can be covered through agreements with other companies. Several of the approved private companies are small consultancy firms within the maritime sector, and many of these use subcontractors to cover all the different disciplines.

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All companies that apply to become approved as private inspector need a quality system that meets the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard. This system is reviewed by NMA before approval. If the quality system is certified, NMA only review the parts that describe the inspections of fishing vessels. A quality system according to ISO 9001 ensures that the company has a good system for quality management, procedures for carrying out the inspection work, and continuous improvement within the company.

### Inspections

Inspections of fishing vessels between 10.67 and 15 m in Norway are divided into inspection of new vessel building or imported vessels (initial inspections) and inspection of

*This article is by **Yngve Folven Bergesen** (Yngve.Folven.Bergesen@sjofartsdir.no), Head, Norwegian Maritime Authority Section for Fishing Vessels*

BJARTE AMBLE / NMA



The fishing vessel *Vikingfjord* sailing to its home port at Herdla in Norway before being inspected by a private inspector. The inspection focuses mainly on safety equipment

30

operating vessels. Inspection of new vessel building takes place during the building process, and must be finished before the vessel can be put into operation. During the process of a new build, there is also review of drawings and documentation of the vessel. The inspection and review of documentation ensures that the vessel is built according to the regulations.

If a vessel is imported into Norway, documentation must be reviewed, and the vessel must be inspected before it can be put into operation. If the vessel is certified from another authority, and the certificate is still valid, the vessel might be put into operation during the period where documentation is reviewed and the vessel is inspected, but this must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

When a newly built or imported vessel is inspected and found to be according to the Norwegian regulations, a document called “Instruction for use of the vessel” is

issued, and this document equals a certificate and is needed for the vessel to operate. The “Instruction for use of the vessel” contains information and restrictions for the vessel, and is valid for 30 months. Within the period from 24 to 30 months after the initial inspection, an intermediate inspection is conducted on the vessel.

This inspection focuses mainly on the safety equipment on board the vessel, and, when everything is found to be in place, the “Instruction for use of the vessel” is renewed for another 30 months. After these two periods of a total of 60 months, a renewal inspection is carried out, during which the hull and propeller are inspected in addition to the equipment.

### Equal treatment

It is important that all vessels and vessel owners are treated equally when enforcing regulations. The Norwegian coastal line is long, and the distance between inspectors

and companies might lead to challenges in these areas. When NMA carries out the inspections, our quality system, including procedures and checklists, ensures equal treatment of all vessels. When these duties are carried out by approved private companies, NMA must ensure the same equality between the private inspectors.

Being an approved private company implies being a part of a rigid regime, and all inspections are to be done according to checklists from NMA. There is one list for initial survey, and one list for operating vessels. Checklists are divided into different fields, such as hull, machinery, navigation, etc., and contain clear instructions to the inspectors on what is accepted. Furthermore, deficiencies on all checkpoints are pre-categorized, to make decisions for the approved private companies easier and equal.

As a part of the quality system, the private company needs procedures that describes how the inspection work and document control is to be done, and these procedures are reviewed by NMA. These procedures normally contain a step-by-step description of the job for the inspector, and ensure that all the different private companies perform to a certain standard.

Every year, NMA does a number of unscheduled inspections on all kinds of vessels, including fishing vessels of all sizes. The unscheduled inspections include a variety of checkpoints on different areas of the vessel, and the findings may give an indication to whether the private inspector is doing a satisfactory job.

In addition to contact with the private inspectors on a case-to-case basis, NMA carries out audits of the approved companies at least every three years.

The audits focus on the quality system, whether it is according to the ISO 9001 standard, that the procedures ensure equality and quality in the work of the approved private companies. Furthermore, the audit focuses on whether there is

compliance with the quality system in the company.

The system with use of approved private companies to survey the smaller Norwegian fishing vessels has now been in operation for more than 12 years, and NMA has a good foundation to conclude on whether it has done a good job.

Findings in both our audits and unscheduled inspections and the accident statistics suggest that the quality of the fishing fleet inspected by private inspectors is as good as the fishing fleet inspected by NMA.

We, therefore, deem the use of private inspectors as a success, and are looking to expand the scheme. ♣

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**Norwegian Maritime Authority**