



Frequently Asked Questions Related to Electronic Vessel Trip Reports in Commercial Fisheries

November 10, 2020

Beginning November 10, 2021, commercial fishermen issued a federal permit to fish for a species managed by the Mid-Atlantic or New England Fishery Management Council will be required to submit their already-required vessel trip reports electronically within 48 hours of the end of a trip. This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about the proposed changes and will be updated periodically. For the latest version, please visit <https://www.mafmc.org/commercial-evtr>.

Questions

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1. What is changing?

A: All commercial fishing vessels with federal permits for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) are currently required to submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO). This new action will require that all commercial VTRs be submitted electronically rather than on paper. These electronic VTRs (eVTRs) will need to be submitted no later than 48 hours after entering port. This requirement will also be extended to vessels issued for-hire (charter/party) permits for New England Council-managed fisheries (i.e., Northeast multispecies). Vessels issued a Mid-Atlantic Council for-hire permit have been required to submit vessel trip reports electronically since March 2018. This rule does not impact vessels issued only a federal lobster permit which will be addressed in a separate rulemaking process.

2. Is anything else changing?

A: You will no longer be required to retain previously-submitted VTRs onboard your vessel. Permit holders will have access to trip reports submitted electronically on the device from which they were submitted and on the NOAA Fish Online website.

3. If I have a state permit but not a federal permit, will the eVTR rule impact me?

A: If you are not required to file a federal VTR, then this rule will not impact you. However, some states may also use VTRs as their state reporting, so please consult the reporting requirements for the state waters in which you fish.

4. I am already using an approved software application to submit VTRs electronically. Do I need to change?

A: No. If you are already using an approved eVTR application to submit VTRs electronically, there is no need to change. However, you will be required to submit your eVTR no later than 48 hours after entering port.

5. What devices can I use to report electronically?

A: Systems are available that operate on tablets, smartphones, and laptop/desktop computers.

6. Do I need an electronic device onboard my vessel that enables me to fill out an eVTR at sea?

A: Regulations require VTRs be filled out with all required information prior to entering port, except for information not yet available (for example, “time landed”). This requirement exists, in part, to provide the seafood dealer(s) where you sell your catch with the unique trip identifier generated by the eVTR. Therefore, you will be required to complete the eVTR prior to entering port. This may be done on a smartphone or tablet that can be easily stored on all boats and held in a waterproof case if needed.

7. When do I need to **complete** my eVTR?

A: Existing regulations require that all VTRs (paper or electronic) be filled out (but not submitted) prior to entering port, and this requirement will not change with the move to electronic reporting. All approved electronic mobile device applications allow entry of trip information while at sea, and without internet connection, for later submission to NOAA upon returning to port.

8. When do I need to **submit** my eVTR?

A: You will be required to submit your eVTR no later than 48 hours after entering port unless you are required to submit sooner as in some sector allocation or quota monitored fisheries.

9. What software application should I use?

A: You can access information about approved applications and other aspects of electronic reporting at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/vessel-trip-reporting-greater-atlantic-region>. Many operators have chosen the SAFIS eTrips/mobile or the NOAA Fish Online programs.

10. I am already using NOAA FLDRS to submit my VTRs. Do I need to change?

A: No. Although other applications are available for electronic reporting, if you are already using FLDRS to submit VTRs electronically, you should continue to do so.

11. What systems are available for those fishing under ocean quahog and surf clam permits?

A. The only application that will currently allow you to comply with reporting guidelines for ocean quahog and clams is the NOAA Northeast Fishery Science Center’s (NEFSC) FLDRS software. Contact NEFSC, at (401) 782-3200 or ne.coopresearch@noaa.gov for information on how to enroll.

12. Can I use FLDRs if I am not already enrolled with that program?

A. FLDRS is a program to collect high resolution fisheries data for research that also satisfies eVTR requirements. Commercial operators interested in enrolling in this program are welcome

to contact the NOAA Northeast Fishery Science Center regarding potential opportunities at (401) 782-3200 or ne.coopresearch@noaa.gov . *If you do not wish to provide such data (including point specific location data of fishing activity and other information) you should choose another application to report your eVTRs.*

13. I have both commercial and for-hire permits for the GARFO region. Can I use the eVTR software to fulfill both of these?

A: Yes, the eVTR software covers both GARFO commercial and for-hire reporting.

14. Will the eVTR software fulfill both my state and federal reporting requirements?

A: The states listed below MAY accept the eVTRs to satisfy state reporting requirements (regardless of what application is used) and/or may allow state reports to be submitted through ACCSP eTrips. You should check with your state agency to determine the exact details:

- Connecticut
- Delaware
- New Jersey
- New York
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island

IMPORTANT: Check with your state agency to determine the specific details of state reporting.

15. Can I submit an eVTR to fulfill my Highly Migratory Species (HMS) reporting requirements?

A: GARFO expects that single “one-stop-reporting” to be available by the time that the mandated electronic reporting goes into effect. Until that happens, if you hold HMS permits and permits for fishing for species managed under a MAFMC or NEFMC fishery management plan, you will need to complete both HMS reports and eVTRs. Efforts are underway to enable the submission of a single vessel report to satisfy the reporting requirements of multiple agencies, including GARFO, HMS, Southeast Regional Office (SERO), Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), and states.

16. How do I get started with NOAA Fish Online?

A: For the mobile version, view the NOAA Fish Online Quick Start Card at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/vessel-trip-reporting-greater-atlantic-region> then call 1-978-281-9188 or email nmfs.gar.helpdesk@noaa.gov . Be sure to have your federal permit numbers handy.

17. Can I switch between NOAA Fish Online for iPhones and desktop computers?

A: Yes. Switching between any of the approved eVTR applications is permissible but may complicate your own record keeping system.

18. How do I get started with SAFIS eTrips?

A: With any of the eVTR applications, you must start with the software vendor. For SAFIS eTrips, you can call 1-800-984-0810. Be sure to have your federal permit numbers handy. You can also visit <https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/safis/etrips> for more information.

19. Can I switch between SAFIS eTrips/mobile 2 and SAFIS eTrips/online?

A: Technically, you may be able to do this, but it may complicate your own record keeping system.

20. Can I use any of the approved applications on my smart phone?

A: NOAA Fish Online is available for Apple (iOS) devices and SAFIS eTrips/mobile is available for Apple, Android, and Windows 10 devices.

21. If software crashes or I lose my device, is there a waiver or will a paper VTR be allowed?

A: As with paper VTRs that may be lost or damaged at sea, failures of electronic devices will be handled on a case-by-case basis by law enforcement personnel.

22. How is the information that I report handled? Will it be shared with anyone?

A: All approved eVTR software applications must transfer VTR data through secure methods into the VTR database. Submitting electronically does not change the confidentiality of the VTR information.

23. Will these electronic devices track where I fish?

A: No. Reporting will still be done on the basis of the NOAA grids (statistical area) that you currently use on paper VTRs. SAFIS eTrips/mobile 2 offers you the ability to track where you caught your fish, but this information stays with the device and is not submitted with the report *if you choose to use this feature*.

24. Is training available?

A: Each software vendor is responsible for providing training and support for their system. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries will be scheduling workshops and webinars to provide training in some of the software applications.

Additional Resources:

- [MAFMC Commercial eVTR Framework Action Page \(www.mafmc.org/evtr\)](http://www.mafmc.org/evtr)
- [GARFO Overview of Approved eVTR software](#)
- MAFMC eVTR Outreach Liaison: Andy Loftus, aloftus@andrewloftus.com
- MAFMC Staff Lead: Karson Coutre, KCoutre@mafmc.org