

Int'l. Fishing and Related Activities

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VMS unit hardware and software that is installed on a vessel pursuant to §300.45. The VMS units are a component of the regional vessel monitoring system administered by the FFA, as well as of the vessel monitoring system administered by NMFS, and as such are used to transmit information between the vessel and the Administrator and NMFS and/or other reporting points designated by NMFS.

[61 FR 35550, July 5, 1996, as amended at 72 FR 6149, Feb. 9, 2007; 75 FR 74643, Dec. 1, 2010]

§ 300.32 Vessel licenses.

(a) Each vessel fishing in the Licensing Area must have a license issued by the Administrator for the licensing period being fished, unless exempted by §300.39. Each licensing period begins on June 15 and ends on June 14 of the following year.

(b) Upon receipt, the license or a copy or facsimile thereof must be carried on board the vessel when in the Licensing Area or Closed Areas, and must be produced at the request of authorized officers, authorized party officers, or authorized inspectors. A vessel may be used to fish in the Licensing Area if the license has been issued but not yet received, provided that the license number is available on board.

(c) The total number of licenses that may be issued and valid at any point in time is 45, five of which shall be reserved for fishing vessels of the United States engaged in joint venture arrangements.

(1) For the purpose of this section, the licenses reserved for vessels engaged in joint venture arrangements are referred to as "joint venture licenses," and the remaining licenses are referred to as "general licenses."

(2) A joint venture arrangement is one in which the subject vessel and its operators are engaged in fishing-related activities designed to maximize the benefits generated for the Pacific Island Parties from the operations of fishing vessels licensed pursuant to the Treaty, as determined by the Administrator. Such activities can include the use of canning, transshipment, vessel slipping and repair facilities located in the Pacific Island Parties; the purchase of equipment and supplies, including fuel supplies, from suppliers located in

the Pacific Island Parties; and the employment of nationals of the Pacific Island Parties on board such vessels.

(d) Licenses are issued by the Administrator. The Administrator will issue licenses only for applications that have been approved by the Regional Administrator. The Regional Administrator's approval is indicated by the signature of the Regional Administrator on the part of the application form labeled "Schedule 1." Upon approval by the Regional Administrator of a license application, the complete application will be forwarded to the Administrator for consideration. Except as provided in paragraph (n) of this section, prior to approving license applications for a given licensing period, the Regional Administrator will issue pre-approvals of license applications that serve the purpose of temporarily reserving approvals up until the time complete applications are due to be received by the Regional Administrator.

(e) The Regional Administrator, in his or her sole discretion, may approve fewer license applications than there are licenses available for any given licensing period or at any given time.

(f) A pre-approval or approval issued by the Regional Administrator pursuant to this section:

(1) Shall not confer any right of compensation to the recipient of such pre-approval or approval;

(2) Shall not create, or be construed to create, any right, title, or interest in or to a license or any fish; and

(3) Shall be considered a grant of permission to the recipient of the pre-approval or approval to proceed with the process of seeking a license from the Administrator.

(g) A pre-approval or approval issued by the Regional Administrator pursuant to this section is subject to being rescinded at any time if the Regional Administrator determines that an administrative error has been made in its granting, false information has been provided by the applicant, circumstances have changed such that the information provided by the applicant is no longer accurate, true or valid, or if the applicant or vessel no longer meets the requirements for licensing under this subpart or under the Act or other applicable law. NMFS will notify

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the applicant of its rescission of a pre-approval or approval within 14 days of the rescission. In the event that the Regional Administrator rescinds an approval after the license has been issued, NMFS will notify the Administrator of such, and request that the Administrator immediately revoke the license.

(h) *Application process for general licenses.* (1) A vessel operator who satisfies the requirements for licensing under the Act and under this subpart may apply for a general license.

(2) In order for a general license to be issued for a vessel, an applicant must submit a complete application to, and obtain an application approval from, the Regional Administrator.

(3) Except for the 2011–2012 licensing period, prior to submitting a complete application, an applicant may request pre-approval of an application by the Regional Administrator by submitting an expression of interest. A pre-approval of an application establishes that the applicant is eligible to be considered for one of the available licenses following timely submission of a complete application. Although submission of an expression of interest is entirely voluntary, applications that have not been pre-approved might not be eligible for approval if the number of applications exceeds the number of available licenses for a given licensing period. A pre-approval will be deemed to be void if the applicant fails to submit a complete application by the date established in paragraph (h)(6) of this section.

(4) Except as provided in paragraph (n) of this section, in order to obtain a pre-approval for a given licensing period, either an expression of interest or a complete application must be submitted to and received by the Regional Administrator no later than June 1st of the year preceding the year in which the licensing period begins.

(5) An expression of interest must include the information listed below, which may be submitted by electronic or hard-copy correspondence following instructions provided by the Regional Administrator.

(i) If the expression of interest is for a vessel for which, as of the June 1st due date for submitting such expres-

sion of interest, NMFS has issued an application approval for the licensing period that starts that year (i.e., a renewal of the license is being sought), the expression of interest shall include:

(A) The licensing period for which the license is being sought.

(B) The current name, IRCS, and annual USCG Certificate of Documentation number of the vessel.

(ii) For all other expressions of interest that do not meet the criteria in paragraph (h)(5)(i) of this section, the expression of interest shall include:

(A) The licensing period for which the license is being sought.

(B) The full name and address of each person who is, or who is anticipated to be, an operator of the vessel for which a license is sought, and for each such person, a statement of whether the person is, or is anticipated to be, owner, charterer, and/or master of the vessel.

(C) A statement of whether or not the vessel to be licensed is known, and if it is known, the current name, IRCS, and annual USCG Certificate of Documentation number, if any, of the vessel.

(D) A copy of the vessel's current USCG Certificate of Documentation. If the vessel has not been issued such a document, then a statement of whether application has been or will be made for a USCG Certificate of Documentation, including identification of all endorsements sought in such application.

(E) If the vessel is known, a list of the licensing periods, if any, during which a license for the vessel was issued under this section.

(F) If the vessel is known, a statement of the total amount, in metric tons, of any tuna species landed or transshipped from the vessel at United States ports, including ports located in any of the States, for each of the calendar years 1988 through the current year.

(6) A complete application for a given licensing period may be submitted to the Regional Administrator at any time up to May 15th within the licensing period, but in order to be considered for approval in the event that more applications are received by the Regional Administrator than there are

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licenses available, a complete application must be received by the Regional Administrator as follows:

(i) No later than February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins; or

(ii) If a pre-approval of the application was issued in accordance with paragraphs (k)(8) or (k)(9) of this section, not later than the date specified by NMFS in the notification of such pre-approval (which will be calculated by NMFS to be no later than 194 days from the date of mailing of the notification of the pre-approval).

(7) License application forms, which include the "Schedule 1" form and the FFA Vessel Register application form, are available from the Regional Administrator. The complete application must be received by the Regional Administrator as specified in paragraph (h)(6) of this section. An application shall not be complete, and shall not be subject to processing, unless it contains all of the information specified on the "Schedule 1" form and all the items listed in paragraphs (h)(7)(i) through (h)(7)(x) of this section, as follows:

(i) The licensing period for which the license is requested.

(ii) The name of an agent, located in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, who, on behalf of the license holder, will receive and respond to any legal process issued in accordance with the Treaty.

(iii) Documentation from an insurance company showing that the vessel will be fully insured for the licensing period against all risks and liabilities normally covered by maritime liability insurance.

(iv) If the owner or charterer is the subject of proceedings under the bankruptcy laws of the United States, a statement that the owner or charterer will be financially able to fulfill any and all responsibilities under the Treaty, Act, and regulations, including the payment of any penalties or fines.

(v) A copy of the vessel's current annual USCG Certificate of Documentation.

(vi) Electronic versions of full color photographs of the vessel in its current form and appearance, including a bow-to-stern side-view photograph of the vessel that clearly and legibly shows

the vessel markings, and a photograph of every area of the vessel that is marked with the IRCS assigned to the vessel.

(vii) A schematic stowage/well plan for the vessel.

(viii) A copy of the VMS unit installation certificate, issued by the Administrator-authorized person who installed the VMS unit, for the VMS unit installed on the vessel in accordance with §300.45.

(ix) An FFA Vessel Register application form that includes all the applicable information specified in the form.

(x) In the case of an application for a vessel that does not meet the criteria in paragraph (h)(5)(i) of this section, any information under paragraph (h)(5)(ii) of this section that has not already been provided or that has changed since it was previously submitted.

(i) *Application process for joint venture licenses.* 1) A vessel operator who satisfies the requirements for licensing under the Act and under this subpart may apply for a joint venture license.

(2) The applicant, in coordination with one or more Pacific Island Parties, shall contact the Administrator to determine the specific information and documents that are required by the Administrator in order to obtain an initial approval from the Administrator for a joint venture license. The applicant shall submit such required information and documents directly to the Administrator. Once an initial approval is obtained from the Administrator, the applicant shall submit a complete application package, as described in paragraph (h)(7) of this section, to the Regional Administrator, along with dated documentation of the Administrator's initial approval, and a letter or other documentation from the relevant national authority or authorities of the Pacific Island Party or Parties identifying the joint venture partner or partners and indicating the Party's or Parties' approval of the joint venture arrangement and its or their concurrence that a joint venture license may be issued for the vessel.

(j) *Appeals*—(1) *Eligibility.* Any applicant who is denied a pre-approval or an approval under this section may appeal the denial. The appeal must be made in

writing and must clearly state the basis for the appeal and the nature of the relief that is requested. The appeal must be received by the Regional Administrator not later than 14 days after the date that the notice of denial is postmarked.

(2) *Appeal review.* Upon receipt of an appeal, the Regional Administrator will appoint a designee who will review the basis of the appeal and issue an initial written decision. The written decision will be mailed to the applicant within 30 days of receipt of the appeal. If the appellant does not request a review within 10 days of mailing of the initial decision, the initial decision is the final administrative action of the Department of Commerce. If, within 10 days of mailing of the initial decision, the Regional Administrator receives from the appellant a written request for review of the initial decision, the Assistant Administrator or a designee will review the basis of the appeal and issue a final written decision. The final decision will be made within 30 days of receipt of the request for review of the initial decision. The decision of the Assistant Administrator or designee constitutes the final administrative action of the Department of Commerce.

(k) *Procedures used by the Secretary to review and process applications for general licenses.* The procedures in this paragraph apply to the process used by NMFS, on behalf of the Secretary and in consultation with the Secretary of State, to review expressions of interest and complete applications, and to approve applications. For the purpose of this section, NMFS' approval of an application means the signing by the Regional Administrator of the "Schedule 1" part of the application form, indicating that the application is complete and that it meets the requirements of the Act and of this subpart for forwarding to the Administrator. For the purpose of this section, NMFS' pre-approval of an application means that the Regional Administrator has initially determined that the applicant is eligible for a general license, but that the application has not yet been approved for forwarding to the Administrator.

(1) NMFS will pre-approve no more applications for a given licensing period than there are licenses available

for that licensing period. A pre-approval will be deemed to be void if the applicant fails to submit a complete application by the date established in paragraph (h)(6) of this section.

(2) NMFS will approve no more applications for a given licensing period than there are licenses available for that licensing period.

(3) NMFS will not approve a license application if it determines that:

(i) The application is not in accord with the Treaty, Act, or regulations;

(ii) The owner or charterer is the subject of proceedings under the bankruptcy laws of the United States, and reasonable financial assurances have not been provided to the Secretary that the owner or charterer will be financially able to fulfill any and all responsibilities under the Treaty, Act, and regulations, including the payment of any penalties or fines;

(iii) The owner or charterer has not established to the satisfaction of the Secretary that the vessel will be fully insured for the licensing period against all risks and liabilities normally covered by maritime liability insurance; or

(iv) The owner or charterer has not paid any final penalty assessed by the Secretary in accordance with the Act.

(4) Except as provided in paragraph (n) of this section, no later than July 16th of each year, NMFS will pre-approve applications from among the expressions of interest and complete applications that were received by June 1st of the current year for the licensing period that starts the following year as provided in this paragraph. If the number of expressions of interest and complete applications does not exceed the number of licenses available, all applications that meet the requirements of paragraphs (h)(4) and (h)(5) of this section and that satisfy the relevant requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart will be pre-approved. If the number of expressions of interest and complete applications exceeds the number of licenses available, those that meet the requirements of paragraphs (h)(4) and (h)(5) of this section and that satisfy the relevant requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart will be prioritized for pre-approval as follows:

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(i) First priority will be given to expressions of interest and complete applications for vessels for which, as of June 1st of that year, application approvals have been issued by NMFS for the licensing period that starts that year (*i.e.*, anticipated license renewal applications), provided that such vessels continue to satisfy the requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart, and provided such vessels have no unsatisfied civil penalties or fines assessed by the Secretary under the Act that have become final.

(ii) Second priority will be given to expressions of interest and complete applications scored using the following system, in descending order of the sum of the points assigned:

(A) 15 points will be assigned for a vessel that has been issued, or will be issued by the date complete applications are due to be received by the Regional Administrator under paragraph (h)(6) of this section, a valid USCG Certificate of Documentation with a fishery endorsement.

(B) 1 point will be assigned for each licensing period, starting with the 1988–1989 licensing period, in which a license had been issued for the vessel pursuant to the Act, for a total of no more than 10 points.

(C) 1 point will be assigned for each calendar year in which at least 3,000 metric tons of fish were landed or transshipped from the vessel in United States ports, including ports located in any of the States, as determined by the Regional Administrator. The applicable period shall run from 1988 through the last calendar year prior to the year in which the applied-for licensing period starts, and the total number of points assigned shall be no more than 5.

(D) In the event that two or more vessels receive the same sum number of points under paragraphs (k)(4)(ii)(A) through (k)(4)(ii)(C) of this section, priority will be given to the vessel from which the greatest amount of fish, by weight, was landed or transshipped in United States ports, including ports located in any of the States, starting in calendar year 1988 and ending in the year prior to the year in which the applied-for licensing period starts, as determined by the Regional Adminis-

trator. In the event that that does not resolve the tie, priority will be given by lottery, which will be conducted by the Regional Administrator.

(5) Except as provided in paragraph (n) of this section, no later than July 26th of each year, NMFS will send notifications by mail to all applicants that submitted expressions of interest or complete applications by June 1st of that year, indicating whether their applications (for the licensing period that starts the following year) have been pre-approved.

(6) No later than March 7th of each year, NMFS will approve applications (for the licensing period that starts that year) that satisfy all of the following conditions:

(i) The application was pre-approved;

(ii) The information associated with the application has not changed since the point of pre-approval in a way such that pre-approval would not have been made using the updated information;

(iii) The complete application was received by February 5th of the same year; and

(iv) The applicant satisfies the requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart.

(7) No later than March 17th of each year, NMFS will notify all applicants (for the licensing period that starts that year) who submitted complete applications by February 5th of that year, whether their applications have been approved under paragraph (k)(6) of this section, and in cases where they have not, whether their applications are being considered for approval under paragraph (k)(8) of this section.

(8) In the event that additional licenses for a given licensing period are available after issuing the approvals under paragraph (k)(6) of this section, NMFS will, after final administrative action by the Department of Commerce on any appeals made under paragraph (j) of this section, do the following:

(i) If the number of outstanding expressions of interest (*i.e.*, expressions of interest that have not been pre-approved) received by June 1st of the year preceding the year in which the licensing period begins, plus the number of outstanding complete applications (*i.e.*, complete applications that have

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not been approved) received by February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins, exceeds the number of licenses available, NMFS will review all such outstanding expressions of interest and complete applications and apply the process described in paragraphs (k)(9)(i)(A) through (k)(9)(i)(C) of this section to pre-approve and approve applications from among that pool of applicants;

(ii) If the number of outstanding expressions of interest received by June 1st of the year preceding the year in which the licensing period begins, plus the number of outstanding complete applications received by February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins, does not exceed the number of licenses available:

(A) No later than June 15th of the year in which the licensing period begins, NMFS will pre-approve all such outstanding expressions of interest and complete applications that satisfy the relevant requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart;

(B) No later than June 25th of the year in which the licensing period begins, NMFS will notify all such outstanding applicants of the pre-approvals, and for those applicants that submitted expressions of interest but not complete applications, also notify them of the date by which a complete application must be received in order to be issued an application approval (which will be calculated by NMFS to be no later than 194 days from the date of mailing of the notification of the pre-approval);

(C) NMFS will review all complete applications received by the required date from applicants pre-approved under paragraph (8)(ii)(A) of this section, and within 30 days of such receipt, approve the application, if and as appropriate and if the applicant satisfies the requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart; and

(D) If and as long as the number of approvals plus outstanding (not voided) pre-approvals does not exceed the total number of licenses available under paragraph (c) of this section, NMFS will review all complete applications received after February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins and before May 16th within the licens-

ing period and, as they are received and in the order they are received (based on the day of receipt), will approve those applications that satisfy the requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart until no more approvals are available. In the event that two or more complete applications are received on the same day, priority for approval will be given by lottery, which will be conducted by the Regional Administrator.

(iii) Within 10 days of approving an application, NMFS will notify the applicant.

(9) If a license or application approval that has been issued for a given licensing period becomes available before or during that licensing period, NMFS will do the following:

(i) If there are any outstanding expressions of interest received by June 1st of the year preceding the year in which the licensing period begins or outstanding complete applications received by February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins, NMFS will review all such outstanding expressions of interest and complete applications and pre-approve and approve applications for that license from among that pool as follows:

(A) Within 45 days of NMFS becoming aware of the availability of the license, NMFS will pre-approve an application using the prioritization criteria and point-assigning system described in paragraphs (k)(4)(i) and (k)(4)(ii) of this section;

(B) Within 55 days of NMFS becoming aware of the availability of the license NMFS will notify all active applicants as to whether their applications have been pre-approved, and for those applications that have been pre-approved, notify each applicant of the date by which a complete application, if not already received, must be received (which will be calculated by NMFS to be no later than 194 days from the date of mailing of the notification of the pre-approval); and

(C) Within 30 days of receiving a complete application that had been pre-approved, NMFS will approve the application, if and as appropriate and if the applicant satisfies the requirements of this subpart.

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(ii) If there are no outstanding expressions of interest received by June 1st of the year preceding the year in which the licensing period begins and no outstanding complete applications received by February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins, if and as long as the number of approvals plus outstanding (not voided) pre-approvals does not exceed the number of licenses available, NMFS will review all complete applications received after February 5th of the year in which the licensing period begins and before May 16th within the licensing period and, in the order they are received (based on the day of receipt), will approve those applications that satisfy the requirements for licensing under the Act and this subpart until no more approvals are available. In the event that two or more complete applications are received on the same day, priority for approval will be given by lottery, which will be conducted by the Regional Administrator.

(iii) Within 10 days of approving an application, NMFS will notify the applicant.

(1) *Procedures used by the Secretary to review and process applications for joint venture licenses.* NMFS, on behalf of the Secretary and in consultation with the Secretary of State, will review and approve applications for joint venture licenses as described in paragraph (k) of this section for general licenses, except that NMFS will not consider expressions of interest for joint venture licenses or pre-approve applications for joint venture licenses. In the event that NMFS receives for a given licensing period more applications for joint venture licenses than there are licenses available, it will approve the applications in the chronological order that the Administrator has provided its initial approval.

(m) *Transferability of application approvals.* Application approvals from NMFS are not transferable among vessel owners or operators or license applicants. Application approvals are transferable among vessels, subject to the following requirements:

(1) A vessel operator may seek to transfer a general or joint venture license to another vessel that meets the requirements for licensing under this

subpart and the Act, only if the license has been valid for the vessel for at least 365 consecutive days and all the fees required by the Administrator for the current licensing period have been paid to the Administrator. The vessel operator may seek to transfer the license by submitting a written request to the Regional Administrator along with a complete application for the other vessel as described in paragraph (h)(7) of this section. Any such transfer may be subject to additional fees for the registration of the vessel on the FFA Vessel Register, as specified in paragraph (b) of §300.45.

(2) Upon receipt of a request and complete application under paragraph (m)(1) of this section, the Regional Administrator, after determining that all the fees required for the vessel by the Administrator for the current licensing period have been paid, that the ownership of the licensed vessel and the ownership of the vessel to which the application approval would be transferred are identical, and that the transferee vessel meets the requirements for licensing under this subpart and the Act, will approve the application and notify the applicant of such within 10 days of the determination.

(3) If a licensed vessel is lost or destroyed, and the operators of the vessel apply for a license for another vessel for the licensing period during which the vessel was lost, or for either of the two subsequent licensing periods, NMFS will consider the replacement vessel to have the license application approval status and history of the lost or destroyed vessel for the purpose of applying the prioritization criteria of paragraph (k)(4) of this section, provided that the ownership of the lost or destroyed vessel and the ownership of the replacement vessel, as determined by the Regional Administrator, are identical, and the replacement vessel meets the requirements for licensing under this subpart and the Act.

(n) *Procedures for 2011–2012 licensing period.* For the licensing period that starts June 15, 2011, and for that licensing period only, pre-approvals may not be sought and will not be issued by NMFS. NMFS will rank order those applications received by February 5, 2011,

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for the 2011–2012 licensing period by applying the criteria in paragraphs (k)(4)(i) and (k)(4)(ii) of this section, except that in lieu of using the criteria in (k)(4)(i), first priority will be given to applications for vessels that as of February 5, 2011, have valid licenses for the 2010–2011 licensing period.

[75 FR 74644, Dec. 1, 2010]

§ 300.33 Compliance with applicable national laws.

The operator of the vessel shall comply with each of the applicable national laws, and the operator of the vessel shall be responsible for the compliance by the vessel and its crew with each of the applicable national laws, and the vessel shall be operated in accordance with those laws.

§ 300.34 Reporting requirements.

(a) Holders of licenses issued under § 300.32 shall comply with the reporting requirements of this section with respect to the licensed vessels.

(b) Any information required to be recorded, or to be notified, communicated or reported pursuant to a requirement of these regulations, the Act, or the Treaty shall be true, complete and correct. Any change in circumstances that has the effect of rendering any of the information provided false, incomplete or misleading shall be communicated immediately to the Regional Administrator.

(c) The operator of any vessel licensed under § 300.32 must prepare and submit accurate, complete, and timely notifications, requests, and reports with respect to the licensed vessel, as described in paragraphs (c)(1) through (10) of this section.

(1) *Catch report forms.* A record of catch, effort and other information must be maintained on board the vessel, on catch report forms (also known as “Regional Purse Seine Logsheets”, or RPLs) provided by the Regional Administrator. At the end of each day that the vessel is in the Licensing Area, all information specified on the form must, for that day, be recorded on the form. The completed catch report form must be mailed by registered airmail to the Administrator within 14 days of the vessel’s next entry into port for the purpose of unloading its

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fish catch. A copy of the completed catch report form must also be submitted to, and received by, the Regional Administrator within 2 days of the vessel reaching port.

(2) *Unloading and transshipment logsheet forms.* At the completion of any unloading or transshipment of fish from the vessel, all the information specified on unloading and transshipment logsheet forms provided by the Regional Administrator must, for that unloading or transshipment, be recorded on such forms. A separate form must be completed for each fish processing destination to which the unloaded or transshipped fish are bound. The completed unloading and transshipment logsheet form or forms must be mailed by registered airmail to the Administrator within 14 days of the completion of the unloading or transshipment. The submitted form must be accompanied by a report or reports of the size breakdown of the catch as determined by the receiver or receivers of the fish, and such report must be signed by the receiver or receivers. A copy of the completed unloading and transshipment logsheet, including a copy of the accompanying report or reports of the size breakdown of the catch as determined by the receiver or receivers of the fish, must also be submitted to, and received by, the Regional Administrator within 2 days of the completion of the unloading or transshipment.

(3) *Port departure reports.* Before the vessel’s departure from port for the purpose of beginning a fishing trip in the Licensing Area, a report must be submitted to the Administrator by telex, transmission via VMS unit, facsimile, or e-mail that includes the following information: Report type (“LBEG”); Regional Register number; trip begin date; date and time (in UTC) of report; IRCS; port name; weight of catch on board (in metric tons) for each of skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and all other species combined; intended action; and estimated date of departure. This information must be reported in the format provided by the Regional Administrator.

(4) *Entry into port for unloading reports.* At least 24 hours before the vessel’s entry into port for the purpose of