



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11426



Introduced by Representative Ma. Cristina Talavera Lopez

**AN ACT MANDATING COASTAL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES TO PROVIDE
FREE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION AND SAFETY GEAR TO MUNICIPAL
FISHERFOLK, ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL MARITIME SAFETY NETWORK,
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Municipal fisherfolk constitute a vital productive force in the national economy, anchoring rural livelihoods and national food security while facing severe structural vulnerabilities, maritime risks, and a persistent lack of basic safety infrastructure within municipal waters. While the 1987 Constitution explicitly mandates the State to protect marginal fishers and advance social justice, small-scale producers remain exposed to sudden weather shifts, engine failures, and collision hazards without direct access to emergency response networks monitored by maritime authorities.

The “Fisherfolk Safety at Sea Act” translates this constitutional obligation into a concrete operational framework by mandating coastal local government units to equip registered municipal fisherfolk with free waterproof two-way emergency radios, life vests, and emergency SOS distress beacons. Designed to respect the operational independence and daily realities of small-scale fishing without imposing restrictive bureaucracy, the bill mandates permanent equipment custody under Property Acknowledgement Receipts, eliminates burdensome clearance fees, guarantees automatic qualification through the Municipal Fisherfolk Registry, and

secures direct funding through local disaster risk reduction resources supported by civil society collaboration.

By strengthening local search-and-rescue capabilities and safeguarding the working conditions of small producers at sea, this measure advances a practical, rights-based policy that protects both the lives and the economic viability of our coastal communities.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



MA. CRISTINA TALAVERA LOPEZ
Representative, Party List ALONA



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11426

Introduced by Representative Ma. Cristina Talavera Lopez

**AN ACT MANDATING COASTAL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES TO PROVIDE
FREE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION AND SAFETY GEAR TO MUNICIPAL
FISHERFOLK, ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL MARITIME SAFETY NETWORK,
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "*Fisherfolk Safety
at Sea Act.*"

SECTION 2. *Declaration Policy.* - It is the declared policy of the State to promote social justice, safeguard human life at sea, enhance coastal disaster risk reduction, and protect the welfare of small-scale municipal fisherfolk. To this end, the State shall establish a comprehensive maritime safety framework that guarantees the permanent provision of emergency communication gear, personal safety apparatus, and disaster protection mechanisms to municipal fishers without imposing burdensome bureaucratic procedures or administrative fees.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) *Emergency Communication Gear (ECG).* Refers to portable, waterproof, shock-resistant communication devices designed for

maritime distress signaling, including but not limited to Very High Frequency (VHF) marine hand-held radios, emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), personal locator beacons (PLBs), or automated SOS distress transponders.

(b) *Municipal Fisherfolk*. Refers to natural persons engaged directly or indirectly in municipal fishing and related activities as defined under Republic Act No. 8550, as amended by Republic Act No. 10654, who are registered in the Municipal Fisherfolk Registry (FishR) of their respective Local Government Units (LGUs).

(c) *Municipal Waters*. Includes not only streams, lakes, inland bodies of water and tidal waters within the municipality, but also marine waters included between two lines drawn perpendicular to the general coastline from any point where the boundary lines of the municipality touch the sea at low tide and a line parallel with the general coastline including offshore islands and fifteen (15) kilometers therefrom.

(d) *Personal Flotation Device (PFD)*. Refers to high-buoyancy, life-preserving vests or jackets rated for open-sea survival and compliant with standards set by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Department of Trade and Industry - Bureau of Philippine Standards (DTI-BPS).

(e) *Force Majeure Loss*. Refers to the destruction, washing away, or loss of safety gear occurring as a direct result of maritime accidents, adverse weather conditions, typhoons, sea surge, vessel capsizing, or severe engine breakdown at sea, beyond the human control of the fisherfolk.

SECTION 4. *Free Safety and Emergency Communication Gear*. - All coastal cities and municipalities shall provide registered municipal fisherfolk with basic safety gear free of charge, including:

(a) *Waterproof Two-Way Emergency Radios* preset to emergency frequencies monitored by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO);

(b) *Emergency SOS Distress Beacons or Location Signalers* for instant emergency broadcast;

(c) *Standard Life Vests and Basic Maritime Safety Kits; and*

- (d) *Waterproof Emergency Manual containing basic sea survival rules and PCG hotline numbers.*

SECTION 5. *Permanent Issuance and Operational Mechanics.* –

- (a) *Mode of Transfer and Custody.* Safety equipment provided under this Act shall be granted directly to registered municipal fisherfolk under a Socialized Equipment Grant Agreement and Stewardship Receipt. Custody shall remain permanently with the beneficiary, subject to annual physical validation during vessel re-registration.
- (b) *Prohibition of Daily Return Systems.* Local Government Units (LGUs) shall not impose daily check-out or check-in requirements that disrupt the departure schedules or fishing operations of municipal fisherfolk.
- (c) *Annual Inspection.* LGUs, through their local agricultural or disaster offices, shall inspect the operational condition of assigned safety gear once a year during annual vessel registration renewals or routine dockside visits.

SECTION 6. *Distribution* - To ensure immediate, hassle-free access and prevent bureaucratic delays:

- (a) *Automatic Qualification.* All fisherfolk duly registered under the Municipal Fisherfolk Registry (FishR) shall automatically qualify for free safety equipment without submitting additional application forms.
- (b) *Prohibition on Extra Clearances.* No LGU or national agency shall require barangay clearances, police clearances, tax clearances, or any fees as a condition for receiving safety gear under this Act.
- (c) *Dockside and On-Site Distribution.* LGUs and BFAR shall conduct equipment distribution directly at coastal barangay halls, fish landing sites, and local ports to avoid disrupting daily fishing schedules.

SECTION 7. *No Penalty for Accidental Loss.* – No municipal fisherfolk shall be held civilly, criminally, or administratively liable, nor shall they be subjected to fines, replacement penalties, or disqualification from public assistance programs for the loss, damage, or destruction of issued safety gear if such loss occurred due to a sea emergency, vessel capsizing, adverse weather, or force majeure.

Upon submission of an Affidavit of Loss certified by the Barangay Chairperson or Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer (LDRRMO), the concerned LGU Property Officer shall be automatically granted relief from property

accountability in accordance with COA rules and regulations, and replacement equipment shall be issued subject to fund availability.

SECTION 8. *Capacity Building and Maritime Safety Orientation.* No safety kit shall be issued without the beneficiary completing a basic Maritime Emergency and Safety Orientation. The DA-BFAR, in joint partnership with the PCG and coastal LGUs, shall conduct mandatory, practical, non-fee training modules covering:

- (a) Basic marine VHF radio operation and emergency MAYDAY distress protocols;
- (b) Proper wearing and maintenance of Personal Flotation Devices;
- (c) Basic sea survival, capsizing protocols, and localized search-and-rescue signaling; and
- (d) Interpretation of weather advisories issued by PAGASA and PCG sea travel advisories.

SECTION 9. *Emergency Communication and Coordination Network.*

- (a) *Systemic Protocol.* All coastal LGUs, through their Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices (LDRRMOs), shall establish a direct, real-time communication link with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the Philippine Navy, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).
- (b) *Rescue Standards.* The network shall maintain 24/7 readiness for real-time weather alerts, distress signal monitoring, joint search-and-rescue protocols, and regular safety training for local fishers.
- (c) *Frequency Allocation and Standard Specifications.* The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), in coordination with the PCG and DA-BFAR, shall allocate dedicated, non-licensed emergency radio frequencies for municipal fisherfolk and establish simplified type-approval specifications for low-cost, waterproof maritime emergency communication devices within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 10. *Fisherfolk Safety Registry.* Each coastal city and municipality shall maintain an updated, confidential database of registered municipal fisherfolk,

their assigned vessels, and issued safety equipment. This database shall be fully integrated into the existing Municipal Fisherfolk Registry (FishR) System.

SECTION 11. *Funding and National Financial Assistance.* — The primary cost for the procurement and maintenance of safety gear mandated under this Act shall be charged against the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF) or the Twenty Percent (20%) Development Fund of the concerned coastal city or municipality.

Provided, That for Fourth (4th), Fifth (5th), and Sixth (6th) class coastal municipalities, a National Fisherfolk Safety Subsidization Program is hereby established, funded under the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) through the budget of the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) and the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) administered by the Department of the Budget and Management (DBM), to cover up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the procurement cost of the equipment mandated herein.

Donations, grants, or equipment contributions made by private entities, non-governmental organizations, or international donor agencies to DA-BFAR or coastal LGUs for the specific purpose of this Act shall be fully deductible from the donor's gross income pursuant to Section 34(H) of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

SECTION 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), as the lead agency, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), and national fisherfolk associations, shall promulgate the national Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). Within sixty (60) days from the publication of the national IRR, all covered coastal cities and municipalities shall issue the necessary local executive orders, administrative guidelines, or municipal ordinances to operationalize the provisions of this Act within their respective jurisdictions.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 15. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect **fifteen (15) days** from its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,

BRIEFER: Fisherfolk Safety at Sea Act

The proposed bill establishes a statutory framework that mandates coastal local government units (LGUs) to furnish registered municipal fisherfolk with free, standardized emergency communication equipment and survival gear.

Municipal fishers face high occupational mortality rates, exposure to sudden extreme weather events, capsizing hazards, and mechanical breakdowns within municipal waters. Unlike commercial fishing vessels regulated under maritime safety regimes, small-scale municipal fishers lack access to real-time distress signaling systems monitored by national maritime security and disaster response networks.

Key Feature	Statutory Provision/Mechanism
Short Title	Fisherfolk Safety at Sea Act
Primary Beneficiaries	Natural persons engaged in municipal fishing registered under the Municipal Fisherfolk Registry (<i>FishR</i>).
Core Mandate	Provision of free equipment kits: (1) Waterproof 2-way emergency radios preset to emergency frequencies, (2) Emergency SOS distress beacons, (3) PCG/DTI-BPS compliant life vests & safety kits, and (4) Waterproof emergency manuals.
Primary Funding Sources and other support	Primary: LGU Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF) or 20% Development Fund Support/Secondary: National Fisherfolk Safety Subsidization Program (created under this bill) covering up to 75% of procurement costs for 4th, 5th, and 6th class coastal municipalities via DA-BFAR GAA budget and DBM Local Government Support Fund (LGSF).
Lead IRR Agency	Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), in joint consultation with DA-BFAR, PCG, League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), and fisherfolk associations.

STATUTORY PROVISIONS ANGLE:

1. Free Safety and Emergency Communication Gear: Small fishers often rely on personal cellphones that lose cellular coverage at sea or malfunction when wet. Requiring preset, non-licensed marine VHF frequencies ensures instant connectivity to coast guard units and local disaster offices without requiring individual radio licenses or recurring subscriptions. Multi-agency specification (DA-BFAR, PCG, DTI-BPS) prevents LGUs from procuring sub-standard, non-survivable gear.
2. Permanent Issuance and Operational Mechanics: Fishing trips usually happen on nocturnal tides, irregular hours, and localized landing sites, daily retrieval systems might create major operational bottlenecks (if everyday ang abutan

at pagsasauli ng mga equipment). Granting permanent personal custody balances property control with operational realities.

3. Administrative Redtape: Fee collection, policy checks, tax clearances, serve as major barriers that exclude the poorest fishers. By linking eligibility exclusively to *FishR*, the bill eliminates bureaucratic delays.
4. Protection against penalties and COA relief mechanics: Under standard government property rules, lost government assets trigger stringent financial liability and administrative surcharges against property officers and custodians. Without an explicit statutory exemption for *force majeure* losses, LGU Property Officers would be reluctant to distribute gear, or would force fishers to pay for lost items after capsizing incidents. This section removes administrative liability while maintaining auditability.
Instead, we shall grant full civil, criminal, and administrative immunity to fisherfolk for accidental gear loss due to sea emergencies, weather, or *force majeure*. The bill will also allow a streamlined COA relief mechanism: a simplified Affidavit of Loss certified by the Barangay Chairperson or LDRRMO will also automatically relieve the LGU Property Officer from property accountability under COA rules.
5. Training before the hand out of the equipment is necessary for the beneficiaries to be conducted and in coordination with concerned agencies and organizations.
6. Funding:
 - a. Primary: LDRRMF or 20% ng Development fund of the LGU
 - b. National Subsidy Program: GAA fund via DA-BFAR and the DBM administered LGSF to subsidize up to 75% of the procurement costs for 4th, 5th, and 6th class coastal municipalities.
 - c. donations or grants from private entities or NGOs are declared 100% deductible from gross income
7. DILG will be the lead agency so LGUs will immediately produce the necessary documents and memo for the implementation of the bill. (but in tight coordination with DA-BFAR, PCG, LMP, and fisherfolk organizations).

POSSIBLE PUSHBACKS:

CONCERN: Objection on the line-item GAA mandates for local equipment procurement

RESPONSE: Emphasis on the subsidies strictly targeted at low-income coastal municipalities (4th to 6th class) through existing mechanisms (LGSF and DA-BFAR budget lines), preventing indiscriminate national spending.

CONCERN: Opposition on Ways and Means to creation of unnecessary new tax shelters

RESPONSE: Section 11 creates no new tax perks; it reiterates allowable deductions for charitable/disaster donations under Section 34(H) of the NIRC

CONCERN: Objections regarding LGU fiscal burden under E.O. 138 devolution rules.

RESPONSE: Highlight that LDRRMF funds are already allocated for local disaster mitigation under R.A. 10121, and that the 75% GAA subsidy WILL protect LGU revenue.