



E-monitoring Expansion Frequently Asked Questions



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

What is an e-monitoring system?

Electronic Monitoring (e-monitoring) systems on fishing vessels use a combination of cameras, sensors, a control box, and a monitor in the wheelhouse. Sensors trigger recording during fishing operations, and the control box stores footage on hard drives. The monitor allows crew to run system checks and provides a live view of camera feeds.

What is the purpose of e-monitoring?

E-monitoring provides a cost-effective alternative to human observers for collecting fisheries data and validating logbook reporting by fishers. Accurate logbook data increases confidence in stock assessments, ecosystem management, and helps demonstrate fishery sustainability. A portion of the footage is reviewed and compared to logbook entries, offering independent verification of fishing activity and ensuring consistent reporting standards across the fleet. AFMA provides feedback reports to concession holders after each reviewed trip to help track reporting accuracy.

What are the benefits of e-monitoring?

E-monitoring has been successfully used in Commonwealth fisheries for over a decade. Key benefits include:

- Cost effective independent monitoring
- Improved logbook data quality
- Greater confidence in data that informs management decisions
- Can verify that protected species interactions are being effectively avoided, supporting use of alternative gear and access to more fishing grounds under specific management conditions
- Enhanced compliance outcomes
- More representative data across the fleet, improving public and market confidence in sustainable practices

Accurate logbook reporting improves stock and ecological risk assessments, especially for target, bycatch and protected species. This strengthens sustainability credentials and supports access to markets with strict monitoring requirements, including eco-certification.

When is the e-monitoring system used?

The e-monitoring system must be switched on during every fishing trip. Cameras activate during gear setting and hauling, triggered by hydraulic activity. Cameras can continue recording for 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the fishing method, to capture catch processing.

How is the footage reviewed and by whom?

The review of e-monitoring footage is overseen by AFMA to ensure consistency, accuracy, and impartiality in fisheries data collection. The footage is reviewed by trained personnel, including AFMA Observers and analysts with experience in fisheries.

Will my logbook reporting requirements change?

No. Reporting requirements for catch, discards, and protected species remain unchanged. E-monitoring footage is used to verify logbook entries. AFMA will send individual feedback reports after each reviewed trip to help you monitor your reporting accuracy.

Is e-monitoring used for compliance?

Primarily, e-monitoring is used to verify and improve logbook reporting. Footage may be reviewed for compliance, including, reporting of interactions with Endangered, Threatened and Protected species, mitigation device deployment and bycatch handling.

AFMA's approach focuses on deterrence and promoting a culture of willing compliance. By analysing behaviour and applying targeted interventions including alerts, audits, penalties, education, and procedural changes, AFMA aims to address root causes of non-compliance and positively influence fisher behaviour.

The E-monitoring System

What are the power requirements?

E-monitoring systems run on the vessel's power supply, with most energy used during gear setting and hauling. When not fishing, systems can enter sleep or standby mode to conserve power. Electrical interference can occur but is mitigated during installation with guidance from your service provider.

How many cameras will be installed?

Each vessel will have between three and six cameras, depending on its configuration and fishery-specific requirements. Details are available on the AFMA website.

Are the systems durable?

Yes. E-monitoring systems are built for marine environments and have proven reliable under challenging conditions. With proper care, systems typically last at least five years.

Do I still need VMS?

Yes. VMS requirements remain unchanged. While VMS and e-monitoring systems can collect similar data, they serve different purposes and complement each other.

How do I ensure my system is properly set up?

Fishery-specific monitoring requirements guide installation. A Vessel Monitoring Plan (VMP) tailored to your vessel, developed by the e-monitoring service provider and approved by AFMA, ensures footage meets these standards. Reviewers assess the first trip post-installation and provide feedback for improvements.

Maintenance and System Issues

How often should I clean my cameras?

Daily cleaning is recommended. A monitor or tablet in the wheelhouse helps check camera status and cleanliness.

Cameras should be installed in locations that provide easy access. Regular checks of cables, sensors, and other equipment are also advised—consult your provider for specifics.

What if the system breaks down in port?

Contact your e-monitoring service provider immediately to schedule repairs. If immediate repair isn't possible, make your vessel available at the earliest agreed time. Notify AFMA in writing once a repair time is set to discuss available options.

What if the system breaks down mid-trip?

You may continue fishing unless you are in a zone requiring 100% monitoring. Upon return to port, arrange repairs promptly. If immediate repair isn't possible, make your vessel available as soon as agreed with your provider. Notify AFMA once repairs are scheduled.

Who covers replacement costs?

E-monitoring systems come with standard warranties. Faults covered under warranty will be repaired or replaced. If not covered, the concession holder is responsible for costs. Proper maintenance helps extend system life.

Privacy

Are the cameras recording 24/7?

No. Cameras only record during fishing operations, specifically gear setting, hauling, and catch processing. Recording is triggered by hydraulic or rotation sensors and generally continues for 30 to 90 minutes post-activity. Cameras do not record outside these periods.

Who owns the data?

The review and analysis of e-monitoring data will be undertaken by AFMA. If you would like to access your footage, you can request it from AFMA.

The data is stored on secure servers, with limited access, and is generally stored for six months. Footage (and clips of footage) may be held longer if being used for other purposes (e.g., research or compliance).

Is crew privacy protected?

Yes. Crew privacy is a core consideration in the design and operation of e-monitoring program under the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*, the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* and the relevant fishery direction permit AFMA to monitor and collect compliance information. However, the vessel owners have a responsibility to notify the crew that fishing operations are being recorded. To ensure privacy risks are identified and addressed, AFMA has conducted a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) as part of its commitment to protecting individual privacy within the e-monitoring program.

To protect crew privacy:

- Camera placement is restricted to designated work areas where fishing activities occur. Cameras are not installed in private or non-operational spaces such as wheelhouses, sleeping quarters, or break areas.
- Footage is only recorded during fishing operations, specifically during gear setting, hauling, and catch processing. Sensors trigger recording based on hydraulic or rotational activity, ensuring that non-fishing time is not captured.
- Access to e-monitoring data is tightly controlled. Only authorised personnel with security clearances issued by the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency are permitted to review footage.

- Data is used exclusively for fisheries management purposes, as outlined in the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991*, including logbook verification, compliance monitoring, and fisheries management.

AFMA's Privacy Policy further reinforces its commitment to safeguarding personal information and ensuring that E-monitoring data is handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

For more information, you can visit:

- [AFMA's Electronic Monitoring Program](#)
- [AFMA's Privacy Policy](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988](#)

Is E-monitoring Data Subject to Freedom of Information Requests?

Yes, e-monitoring data is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), which allows individuals to request access to documents held by government agencies, including AFMA. This includes video footage and data collected through e-monitoring systems.

AFMA manages FOI requests under strict guidelines to ensure we adhere to the FOI Act. If AFMA receives an FOI request that includes e-monitoring footage or related data, AFMA will consult with the affected concession holders or operators where appropriate. Where the information request contains sensitive business information or personal information the individuals will be consulted and provide input before any decision is made regarding disclosure. Footage may be exempt or conditionally exempt from release under the FOI Act if:

- It contains personal information that could compromise individual privacy (subject to the public interest test).
- It holds commercial value that could be harmed by public disclosure.
- It contains business information or professional affairs (subject to the public interest test).
- It relates to ongoing compliance investigations or legal matters.

For more information, you can visit AFMA's webpage on the [Electronic Monitoring Program](#) or consult the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) directly.

Further Assistance

For servicing, repairs, or operational questions, contact your e-monitoring service provider.

If you have additional questions about the e-monitoring program, need help interpreting requirements, or guidance on how it applies to your operations, visit the [AFMA website](#) or contact the Electronic Monitoring team.

Contact Information

Electronic Monitoring Team

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