

This final rule will also allow three modifications for hooped hard TEDs. The first is the use of a water deflector fin used to increase shrimp retention. The original Coulon TED design incorporates such a water deflector fin. This fin can be welded onto the forward edge of the escape opening, projecting aft into the TED with an angle of 5 to 45-degrees from the normal, horizontal plane of the trawl. The fin must be constructed of a flat aluminum bar, up to 3/8 inch (0.95 cm) thick and up to 4 inches (10.2 cm) deep. The fin may be as wide as the width of the escape opening, minus 1 inch (2.5 cm).

The second allowable modification is the use of a webbing flap. The resultant escape opening for the offshore hooped hard TED with a webbing flap must have a stretched mesh circumference of no less than 142 inches (361 cm). The end of the flap cannot extend more than 24 inches (61 cm) past the posterior edge of the frame. This is the same webbing flap allowed for use with single-grid hard TEDs with the 71-inch (180 cm) offshore opening (see 50 CFR 223.207(d)(3)(iii)).

The third allowable modification for hooped hard TEDs is the use of a hinged

door frame to partially cover the escape opening. The door frame must be at least as wide as the escape opening, may be up to a maximum of 24 inches (61 cm) long, may be covered with taut mesh webbing (the size of the mesh cannot be greater than that used for the TED extension webbing), and must be connected to the forward edge of the escape opening by a hinge device that will allow the door to open upwards freely. The posterior edge of the door frame, in the closed position, must lie at least 12 inches (30 cm) forward of the posterior edge of the escape opening. If a water deflector fin is used with a hinged door it must be welded to the posterior edge of the door frame, projecting aft into the TED with an angle of 5–45 degrees from the normal, horizontal plane of the trawl. The fin must be constructed of a flat aluminum bar, up to 3/8 inch (0.95 cm) thick and up to four inches (10.2 cm) deep. The fin may be as wide as the width of the escape opening, minus one inch (2.5 cm). The deflector fin must be no less than 12 inches (30 cm) forward of the posterior edge of the escape opening, when the door is in the closed position. Two stopper ropes or a hinge limiter

may be used to limit the maximum opening height of the hinged door frame, as long as the minimum clearance between any part of the deflector bars and any part of the door, including a water deflector fin if installed, in its fully open position is at least 23 1/4 inches (59 cm) for an offshore hooped hard TED or at least 20 inches (51 cm) for an inshore hooped hard TED. The purpose of the stopper ropes or hinge limiters is to prevent the door frame from opening excessively during net deployment and haulback, possibly resulting in loss of catch or damage to the door. Any stopper ropes or hinge limiters must not restrict the free operation of the door, up to its maximum opening (i.e. the door must be able to easily swing to the required opening height before the stops or limiters affect its movement). The hinged door cannot be used in combination with a webbing flap or with a water deflector fin attached to the forward edge of the escape opening (See Figure 2 for illustration of the optional hinged door frame, shown with water deflector fin).

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S