

Local Notice to Mariners

Number 08 of 2025

01/01/2025

Dead Tows, Towing of Unusual Objects and Non-Routine Towage Events

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Port Marine Safety Code 'Guide to Good Practice' requires Harbour Authorities to give special consideration to tows involving dead-ships or unusual objects and towage events that are not classed as standard.

Ship owners, towage contractors, tug masters, project managers and agents are advised that the person responsible for the safety and planning of the manoeuvre (and thereby acting as the Towing Master) must be clearly identified for all operations and will be responsible for the production of risk assessments, method statements and passage plans which must be discussed and agreed in advance with the Harbour Authority.

Barge movements and other routine towage operations may be classed as 'Standard' after an initial assessment. Operators should still submit their Risk Assessment and Method Statements yearly, including possible Tug and Barge specifications and likely configurations (once approved, these will be held within the Marine Safety Management System for VTS's reference).

A "[Non-Routine Towage Assessment](#)" Form, must be submitted to the Harbour Master's Office in advance of the operation. When the details of the operation have been fully discussed and agreed, the written approval of the Harbour Master, or his representative, will be given on this form, and it then returned to the applicant.

The form, and other relevant documentation, should be forwarded at least 5 days before the intended date of the operation to: southamptonvts@abports.co.uk and port.planning@abports.co.uk.

Extract of The Port Marine Safety Code Guide to Good Practice (dated February 2018)

Dead Tows & Project Towage:

10.4.8 Dead tows, unusual objects and non-routine towage events will require individual assessment, including risk assessment, and planning.

10.4.9 For arrivals/departures from/to sea, dead tows should be pre-approved by the facility utilising a towage plan format which includes risk assessment and method statements regarding: harbour tug positioning and utilisation;

- whether the tow is to be transferred from the sea tug: transferring tows creates additional hazards, particularly handling heavy equipment, and whether the sea tug remains fast until the tow is alongside will depend on berth characteristics, locks etc., the characteristics of the sea tug and the availability of suitable harbour tugs;
- riggers/line handlers being transferred to the tow to recover sea gear, emergency tow lines and to prepare the tow for berthing;
- weather limitations and sea state;
- suitability of destination berth and whether adjacent berths need to be cleared; and
- the number of suitably experienced pilots required for the sea tug and/or tow.

10.4.10 For in-harbour non-routine tows, key decisions should be recorded and the person (acting as towing or barge master) who is responsible for the safety of the manoeuvre and the towage plan, should be clearly identified. This person is responsible for:

- conducting an appropriate risk assessment/safety case to be submitted to the harbour authority;
- producing a method statement;
- the passage plan; and
- the safety of the manoeuvre.

10.4.11 The facility should give written approval for the tow to go ahead once the towage plan has been reviewed and agreed.

10.4.12 In exceptional circumstances, and for major projects, the use of simulated trials should be considered.

The content of this Notice will be kept under regular review.

**Steven Masters,
Harbour Master**