



NON-HARBOUR TOWING OPERATIONS

TOWAGE MAY BE REQUIRED IF A SHIP IS UNABLE TO MOVE INDEPENDENTLY DUE TO POWER FAILURE OR OTHER OPERATIONAL LIMITATIONS. TOWING PRESENTS VARIOUS RISKS FOR THE TOWED SHIP, INCLUDING THE TRANSFER OF POSITIONAL CONTROL TO ANOTHER VESSEL, THE POTENTIAL LACK OF ONBOARD MONITORING, AND THE OFTEN SIGNIFICANTLY LONGER PASSAGE TIME, WHICH INCREASES THE SHIP'S EXPOSURE TO HAZARDS.

The insurance coverage on towage of an entered ship is a risk covered, specified in rule 19.14.1.3, subject to prior approval from Managers (please note that this does not address the conduct of harbour towage).

Each towing request will be evaluated on an individual basis. To expedite the approval process, several pieces of information must be provided, and certain actions must be taken.

The reasons why a tow is required should be explained, as the preferred method remains proceeding under own power.

It is essential to ascertain whether the towed ship will be manned, and whether it is free of cargo. Generally, it is expected that the ship's flag state or classification society, as appropriate, has approved the towage, normally by the issue of a certificate to the ship, confirming its fitness to be towed.

Additionally, the underwriter may request a copy of the towage agreement, such as the TOWCON 2021 contract.

TOWAGE VENDORS

Before engaging a towage company or vendor, owners should conduct thorough due diligence by evaluating the company's track record. This involves verifying that the towage company has designated tugboats with the appropriate type and engine capacity for the intended operations. Additionally, owners should ensure that the vendor has prior experience with dead tow operations and tows involving vessels of similar size and type. It's also important to consider the vendor's redundancy measures, such as the availability of backup tugs in case of a breakdown.

TOWAGE PLAN

After identifying the necessity for towage, it is imperative to formulate a towage plan outlining the procedure for conducting the tow. The primary goal of this plan is to demonstrate that the tow has undergone a thorough risk assessment, describing how the tow will be safely conducted and include preparation to handle any incidents that may occur during the towing operations.

Each towage plan should be based on the complexity and demands of the intended tow. For example, a straightforward coastal tow lasting only a few hours would not require the same level of detail as a prolonged tow spanning several weeks in deep sea conditions.

AT A MINIMUM, THE TOWAGE PLAN SHOULD CONTAIN OR DESCRIBE THE FOLLOWING:

- A voyage plan showing the intended towage route
- Communication between all parties involved throughout the towing operation
- Expected stability condition of the towed ship
- Minimum required towage power calculation
- Towage arrangement, usually supplemented by a diagram
- Emergency towage arrangement
- Maximum weather limits
- Weather forecasting format and schedule
- Contingency ports identified
- Contingency plans made for different scenarios, e.g. towline failure, towed ship taking on water etc
- Reporting requirements.

In cases where in-house expertise is not available, some companies may request towage plans to be developed by external consultancies.

Once the towage plan has been developed as far as possible, this should be forwarded to the Club for consideration.

PREPARATION FOR TOW

Owners must adhere to all relevant statutory requirements for towing operations. This includes securing the necessary permits and notifying local authorities in the jurisdictions the tow will pass through. Additionally, it is advisable to minimise the amount of fuel, lubricating oil and other marine pollutants on board the vessel being towed.

If the vessel will be manned during towing, it is recommended to keep the crew to the minimum number necessary for safety, allowing them to handle any potential emergencies as outlined in the towage plan. Ensuring that fire detection and firefighting equipment are fully operational is crucial, along with having sufficient lifesaving appliances available for emergency abandonment if needed.

A common practice is to apply clear markings at the waterline of the towed vessel. This allows observers from the tug to easily determine if the vessel's draft has changed.

TOWAGE APPROVAL SURVEY

Prior to departure, it is advisable to engage an independent surveyor to oversee and approve the tow prior to departure. Also, it may be a requirement of the Hull and Machinery (H&M) insurer to appoint a Marine Warranty Surveyor to inspect the tow and towage plan. The surveyor should be provided with a copy of the towage plan in advance of attendance. The intention of the towage approval survey is to ensure that the vessel is in a suitable condition to be towed, that the tug or towing vessel is adequate, and that the towage plan and towing arrangement are being correctly followed at the point of departure.

TYPICAL POINTS THAT THE SURVEYOR WILL CHECK ARE:

- The vessel being towed has rudder locked amidships and propeller(s) secured in position to prevent movement
- All external hatches and hull penetrations are closed/locked
- Condition of towing points are suitable
- Condition of towing arrangements and connections as per plan, with chafing protection provided as necessary
- Assess arrangement provided
- Navigation lights are properly set for the tow and have sufficient power to enable completion of the tow.

Additionally, the surveyor will inspect the tug and ensure that it meets the necessary specifications to allow the ship to be towed safely. This includes verifying that the tug has sufficient fuel to complete the voyage and assessing the condition of its towing equipment.

Before departure, it is advisable to conduct a stowaway check of the tow, with further checks if the tow is required to make additional stops along the route.

Upon completion of the towage approval plan, the attending surveyor will issue a towage approval certificate, indicating satisfaction that the tow can proceed safely. This certificate will outline certain conditions to be complied with, and normally, the certificate will have a validity period. If this period is exceeded, it may require another attendance from the surveyor to re-validate the towage plan.

Occasionally, longer distance towage may be required, and although this may appear a straightforward operation, ensuring a safe tow involves careful consideration of numerous factors. Approval from various stakeholders, including the flag state, classification society, H&M and P&I insurers, may be required before the operation can proceed. It is advisable to initiate early engagement with these stakeholders to facilitate timely approval of the towage operation.

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