

TOWAGE GUIDELINES

Notwithstanding anything contained in these guidelines, towage requirements for individual vessels remains the responsibility of the Master after due consultation with the Duty Harbour Master or (if under pilotage) the Pilot. The Harbour Authority may, in certain circumstances, use their powers to direct a vessel to take a tug in the interest of the vessel and the port's safety. RNLI lifeboats and vessels less than 10.68m (35') belonging to a Club or Marina within the harbour (when towed by Club or Marina support craft) are exempt from these guidelines.

All tows are measured from the forward end of the towing vessel to the stern of the last towed vessel and considered "overall length". For operations where the overall length of tow is greater than or equal to 48m pilotage is mandatory (see [Pilotage Direction and Regulations](#)). Typically, this must be booked with 24 hours' notice, but more urgent needs can be considered.

For small vessels not subject to pilotage, an informal towage plan must still be discussed with the Duty Harbour Master before entering the harbour or departing moorings.

If it is necessary to provide towage assistance in an emergency, the towage provider should inform the Duty Harbour Master of their intentions as soon as it is safe to do so. Emergency situations must be reported to HM Coastguard via CH16 or 999 and then to the Duty Harbour Master via CH68 or 02392 463 419.

Towage Configuration – barges and small craft - If weather conditions allow, switching tow configuration from stern tow to alongside tow before entering the harbour should be preferred to ensure full control in the harbour's rapid tidal flow and relatively narrow navigable channel. It is strongly advised that vessels do not enter the harbour in a stern tow configuration during the flood tide. Elsewhere, when navigating with the tide, an alongside tow configuration should be favoured wherever possible.

Commercial Tows - Paid for towage services may only be provided by commercial operators, whose vessels are fit for purpose, appropriately Coded, and where Master and vessels' crews have received appropriate training. In any case, prior approval from the Duty Harbour Master and a towage plan will be required.

Tows Under Pilotage - If under pilotage, a towage plan must be agreed by the Tug Master, Pilot and towed vessel's Master prior to the operation and notified to the Duty Harbour Master. Particular attention should be given to weather forecasts, number/suitability (bollard pull) of assisting vessels, command/communication procedures, tug assist methods, speed, abort positions, lay-by berths, anchorages and turning areas.

Towing Equipment - Operators should ensure all lines wires shackles and fixed equipment and emergency releases are fit for purpose and meet all the required standards necessary.

Masters of towing and assisting craft are reminded of their responsibility to ensure the watertight integrity of their vessels. Procedures should be put in place when planning the tow to ensure that ships crews do not let-go the towing gear in such a fashion that there is a danger of it fouling the Tug or Ship's propulsion systems, or endangering personnel.

Defects - A vessel with defects or without anchors may be required to take a tug to enter, depart or be relocated within the harbour. All defects are to be reported to the Duty Harbour Master prior to arrival.

Dead Ships - Vessels without main engines will be required to take a tug to enter or depart the harbour. The number of tugs required will depend on the environmental influences envisaged during the operation.

Reporting - In accordance with the requirements of Admiralty Sailing Directions (ASD - Channel Pilot) and Admiralty List of Radio Signals – Pilot Services, Vessel Traffic, Services and Port Operations (ALRS 6(1)):

- Tows where overall length is 20m+ should report to Southampton VTS;
- Tows where overall length is 30m+ should notify the Harbour Office before arrival.

Towing in Fog - In accordance with the requirements of Admiralty Sailing Directions (ASD - Channel Pilot) and Admiralty List of Radio Signals – Pilot Services, Vessel Traffic, Services and Port Operations (ALRS 6(1)):

- The Harbour Office should be notified in advance of any towage operation of 20m or more intending to cross the Langstone Bar in reduced visibility; and
- Towage subject to Pilotage requirements should not take place in reduced visibility. The harbour operates a fog procedure and ceases all towage movements in restricted visibility of less than half a nautical mile (926 metres).

Further Reading and References:

- Guidelines for Safe Harbour Towage Operations:
<http://eurotugowners.com/guidelines-for-safe-harbour-towage-operations>
<https://eurotugowners.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/STP-Guidelines-First-Edition-February-2015.pdf>
- UK Standard Conditions for Towage and Other Services (1986):
[https://www.clarksons.com/uk-standard-conditions-for-towage-and-other-services-\(revised-1986\)/](https://www.clarksons.com/uk-standard-conditions-for-towage-and-other-services-(revised-1986)/)