



Merchant Shipping Directorate



## EMERGENCY TOWING PROCEDURES ON SHIPS

### **Technical Notice SLS.16 Rev.1**

*Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters,  
Owners' Representatives and Recognised Organisations*

Reference SOLAS 74 Chapter II-1 Regulation 3-4 as amended by Resolution MSC.256 (84), and MSC.1/Circ.1255

Regulation 3-4.2 requires that ship-specific emergency towing procedures be available on:

- all passenger ships not later than 1 January 2010;
- cargo ships constructed on or after 1 January 2010; and
- cargo ships constructed before 1 January 2010 by not later than 1 January 2012.

The emergency towing procedures, which shall complement the “emergency preparedness” element required by Paragraph 8 of Part A of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, shall be developed by the Company based on the guidance contained in MSC.1/Circ.1255

The emergency towing procedures may be either incorporated in their entirety within the Safety Management System or may be in the form of a stand-alone booklet with explicit reference thereto being contained within the relevant section of the Safety Management System.

Merchant Shipping Directorate

20 August 2013

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Transport Malta  
Technical Notice SLS.16 Rev.1  
Page 2 of 6

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Ref.: T4/3.01

MSC.1/Circ.1255  
27 May 2008

## **GUIDELINES FOR OWNERS/OPERATORS ON PREPARING EMERGENCY TOWING PROCEDURES**

- 1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eighty-fourth session (7 to 16 May 2008), following a recommendation of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment, approved Guidelines for owners/operators on preparing emergency towing procedures, set out in the annex, aimed at assisting owners/operators in preparing ship-specific emergency towing procedures for ships subject to SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4.
- 2 The Guidelines are intended to help owners/operators to carry out the necessary steps in establishing emergency towing procedures, provide information on the scope of the emergency towing booklet and give guidance towards creating procedures for towage.
- 3 The procedures developed by means of these Guidelines aim at supporting the crew in establishing the safest and most efficient course of action to be taken when confronted with an emergency that requires towing.
- 4 Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed Guidelines to the attention of all parties concerned for application in conjunction with SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4 (Emergency towing arrangements and procedures).

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## ANNEX

### GUIDELINES FOR OWNERS/OPERATORS ON PREPARING EMERGENCY TOWING PROCEDURES

#### 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist owners/operators in preparing ship-specific emergency towing procedures for ships subject to SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4. The procedures should be considered as part of the emergency preparedness required by paragraph 8 of part A of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

#### 2 OBSERVATIONS

2.1 Owners, operators and crews should take into consideration that the nature of an emergency does not allow time for deliberation. Accordingly, the procedures should be practiced beforehand.

2.2 The towing procedures should be maintained on board the ship for ready use by the ship's crew in preparing their ship for towage in an emergency.

2.3 The crew should have good knowledge of equipment stowage location and accessibility. Any identified improvements to stowage arrangements should be implemented.

2.4 Crew dealing with an emergency situation should be aware of power availability required for winches and tools, as well as for deck lighting (for bad/low visibility and night time situations).

2.5 It is recognized that not all ships will have the same degree of shipboard equipment, so that there may be limits to possible towing procedures. Nevertheless, the intention is to predetermine what can be accomplished, and provide this information to the ship's crew in a ready-to-use format (booklet, plans, poster, etc.).

#### 3 SHIP EVALUATION

3.1 The owner/operator should ensure that the ship is inspected and its capability to be towed under emergency situations is evaluated. Both equipment on board and available procedures should be reviewed. Items that need to be inspected are described in the following paragraphs.

3.2 The ability of the ship to be towed from bow and stern should be evaluated, and the following items should be reviewed:

- .1 line handling procedures (passing and receiving messenger lines, towlines, bridles); and
- .2 layout, structural adequacy and safe working loads of connection points (fairleads chocks, winches, bitts, bollards), etc.



3.3 The on-board tools and equipment available for assembling the towing gear and their locations should be identified. These should include but not be limited to:

- .1 chains;
- .2 cables;
- .3 shackles;
- .4 stoppers;
- .5 tools; and
- .6 line throwing apparatus.

3.4 The availability and characteristics of radio equipment on board should be identified, in order to enable communication between deck crew, bridge and the towing/salvage ship.

3.5 Unless the safe working loads of connection points are known, these loads should be determined by an engineering analysis reflecting the on-board conditions of the ship. The Guidance on shipboard towing and mooring equipment (MSC/Circ.1175) may be used for guidance.

3.6 The evaluation should be performed by persons knowledgeable in towing equipment and operations.

#### **4 EMERGENCY TOWING BOOKLET**

4.1 The Emergency Towing Booklet (ETB) should be ship specific and be presented in a clear, concise and ready-to-use format (booklet, plan, poster, etc.).

4.2 Ship-specific data should include but not be limited to:

- .1 ship's name;
- .2 call sign;
- .3 IMO number;
- .4 anchor details (shackle, connection details, weight, type, etc.);
- .5 cable and chain details (lengths, connection details, proof load, etc.);
- .6 height of mooring deck(s) above base;
- .7 draft range; and
- .8 displacement range.



4.3 All procedures developed in accordance with section 5 should be presented in a clear and easy to understand format, which will aid their smooth and swift application in an emergency situation.

4.4 Comprehensive diagrams and sketches should be available and include the following:

- .1 assembly and rigging diagrams;
- .2 towing equipment and strong point locations; and
- .3 equipment and strong point capacities and safe working loads (SWLs).

4.5 A copy should be kept at hand by the owners/operators in order to facilitate the passing on of information to the towage company as early as possible in the emergency. A copy should also be kept in a common electronic file format, which will allow faster distribution to the concerned parties.

4.6 A minimum of three copies should be kept on board and located in:

- .1 the bridge;
- .2 a forecastle space; and
- .3 the ship's office or cargo control room.

## 5 DEVELOPING PROCEDURES

5.1 Ship-specific procedures should be identified during the ship's evaluation and entered accordingly in the ETB. The procedures should include, as a minimum, the following:

- .1 a quick-reference decision matrix that summarizes options under various emergency scenarios, such as weather conditions (mild, severe), availability of shipboard power (propulsion, on-deck power), imminent danger of grounding, etc.;
- .2 organization of deck crew (personnel distribution, equipment distribution, including radios, safety equipment, etc.);
- .3 organization of tasks (what needs to be done, how it should be done, what is needed for each task, etc.);
- .4 diagrams for assembling and rigging bridles, tow lines, etc., showing possible emergency towing arrangements for both fore and aft. Rigged lines should be lead such that they avoid sharp corners, edges and other points of stress concentration;
- .5 power shortages and dead ship situations, which must be taken into account, especially for the heaving across of heavy towing lines;
- .6 a communications plan for contacting the salvage/towing ship. This plan should list all information that the ship's master needs to communicate to the salvage/towing ship. This list should include but not be limited to:
  - .1 damage or seaworthiness;



- .2 status of ship steering;
- .3 propulsion;
- .4 on deck power systems;
- .5 on-board towing equipment;
- .6 existing emergency rapid disconnection system;
- .7 forward and aft towing point locations;
- .8 equipment, connection points, strong points and safe working loads (SWL);
- .9 towing equipment dimensions and capacities; and
- .10 ship particulars;
  
- .7 evaluation of existing equipment, tools and arrangements on board the ship for possible use in rigging a towing bridle and securing a towline;
- .8 identification of any minor tools or equipment providing significant improvements to the “towability” of the ship;
- .9 inventory and location of equipment on board that can be used during an emergency towing situation;
- .10 other preparations (locking rudder and propeller shaft, ballast and trim, etc.); and
- .11 other relevant information (limiting sea states, towing speeds, etc.).

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