

TOWAGE GUIDELINES - GENERAL

Introduction

These guidelines form part of the Cromarty Firth Port Authority's, trading as Port of Cromarty Firth (PoCF), Safety Management System and have been drawn up in line with the Port Marine Safety Code.

These guidelines are intended to be used to assist those involved in towage operations within the jurisdiction of the port; that is an area bounded by the following limits:

- Inland Limit** – a straight line drawn across the Cromarty Firth from Arduillie Point on the north shore to Findon Pier on the south shore.
- Seaward Limit** – on the north a straight line drawn from the rock which dries 6 feet situated about 0.45 miles 190° from Port an Righ to a position in latitude 57° 42.5' north, longitude 3° 52' west; on the east a straight line drawn from a position latitude 57° 42.5' north, longitude 3° 52' west to a position latitude 57° 38' north, longitude 3° 57' west; on the south so much of a straight line drawn from Navity Chimney to a position in latitude 57° 38' north, longitude 3° 57' west as lies to seaward of the coast.

General information

As both Competent and Statutory Harbour Authority, PoCF must be satisfied that the tugs operating within the above area are able to undertake towage duties safely, meaning:

- experienced and appropriately certified crews
- fully operational and certified vessels

To assist this requirement PoCF has in place a "Harbour Tug Self-declaration procedure". Further details can be found in annex 01.

A standard Port Marine Safety Code risk assessment exists for towage operations within the jurisdiction of the port. This can be provided on request. Specific risk assessments may be required for certain operations, see relevant section of these guidelines for details.

Definitions

Sea-going Tug

A Sea-going Tug is a towing vessel which will typically arrive in the firth towing another vessel or object, or arrive to tow out another vessel or object, such as a dumb barge. This type of vessel is treated as a standard visiting vessel and is not subject to the audit process outlined in annex 1.

Harbour Tug

A Harbour Tug is a towing vessel that is designed primarily for maneuvering in ports and harbours and will typically assist during a maneuver. Examples include ASD, Voith water tractors, and rotor tugs. This type of vessel is subject to the audit process outlined in annex 1.

Ship-assist Towage

Towage operations which involve assisting self-propelled vessels under way, typically during entry/exit to the port/shifting berth within the port.

Dead/ Project Tow

Towage operations which involve vessels without propulsion, including but not limited to; barges, pontoons, dredgers, Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODU), unusual objects, or non-routine towage operations which require special consideration. Dead/Project Towage may involve a mixture of Sea-going and Harbour Tugs.

General Towage

Routine, repetitive operations involving small tugs and workboats within port limits.

Towmaster

The Towmaster should have sufficient knowledge, experience and understanding of towage within the marine environment. **Towmasters will be approved using the details as noted on the PoCF website.**

Pilotage

For all operations involving towage where the length of tow is >60m (as defined in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea), pilotage is compulsory in all parts of the above area of jurisdiction which lie to the west of longitude 4° west.

Pilot may board at the outer or inner pilot station. This will be communicated prior to arrival.

A vessel operating under a pilotage exemption certificate for the Cromarty Firth is required to take a pilot if intending to employ the services of a tug.

The pilotage directions are available on the website or on request from PoCF.

Towage

The nature of the trade visiting the Cromarty Firth on a regular basis means that Ship-assist Towage is not practiced regularly. As such there are no Harbour Tugs contracted to remain on standby within the firth. "PoCF towage guidelines – minimum requirements" can be used as a guide to determine the number of Harbour Tugs which are likely to be required for the maneuver. The duty marine manager/duty pilot will advise on specific requirements at the enquiry stage.

Shipmasters, agents etc. must provide the "Harbour Tug Audit, Self-declaration" form for each Harbour Tug which is contracted for any Ship-assist Towage operation within the Cromarty Firth. (See General Information section and annex 1)

For each dead/project tow operation (arrival/departure/shifting berth within the port) the port authority requires from the operator or their agent:

- Specific risk assessment covering all aspects of the operation
- Method statement covering all aspects of the operation
- "Harbour Tug Audit, Self-declaration" form for each Harbour Tug involved in the Dead Tow
- "Dead Tow pro forma method statement" (not later than 24 hours before arrival of the tow)

PoCF will provide the operator or their agent:

- Specific risk assessment covering all aspects of pilotage
- "Harbour Tug Audit, Self-declaration" form returned with an acknowledgement of the declarations
- "Dead Tow pro forma method statement" returned with the signature of the duty marine manager indicating the operation may proceed within the stated parameters

In circumstances where towage services are provided to a Dead/Project Tow, a planning meeting is to be held between the stakeholders involved to discuss all aspects of the proposed movement. The use of simulator trails should be considered.

Dead/Project Tows will only be considered during the hours of darkness on a case-by-case basis. Special consideration must be made to adequate lighting for personnel on board, berth lighting and the safety of navigation within Port limits. Proper control measures must be agreed with the Port Authority and implemented before the operation begins. Where these can not be met or agreed, daylight only towage restrictions will otherwise prevail.

General towage is carried out on occasion within the port. These activities are not licensed or approved by the Port Authority due to their nature, however all activities must be carried out in a safe manner under the operator's risk assessment and standard operating procedures. The port authority may on occasion request a copy of these documents.

Towmaster

For each in port non-routine tow, or any other deemed by the PoCF, a Towmaster should be allocated to the object/barge being towed. The Towmaster is responsible for the following:

- i) Conducting an appropriate risk assessment/safety case to be submitted to the Port Authority
- ii) Producing a method statement
- iii) the passage plan; and
- iv) The safety of the manoeuvre

The Towmaster cannot be the duty Pilot or the Master of any vessel involved within the tow.

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A full Master/Pilot exchange should take place between the Pilot, Towmaster and lead tug Master. This is to include a formal passage plan and Management of Change procedure.

Crew Certification

National certification of tug crew is set by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as per the Port Marine Safety Code. All personnel engaged as crew on board Harbour Tugs working within the port jurisdiction must meet these requirements. Harbour Tugs must be adequately manned with suitably experienced and qualified personnel, at all times. It is the responsibility of the tug operator to ensure the above is complied with.

Restricted Visibility

Minimum visibility for any towage operation is 2 cables (370m), or the distance required for the pilot/master on board the vessel/object being towed to see the assisting towage vessels and vice versa.

If, during a pilotage act of any nature that involves towage, the visibility reduces to unacceptable levels, the procedure as discussed with the Master/Tow master and PoCF Pilot will be implemented as per the passage plan. This will involve as a minimum:

- Reducing speed to the minimum for maneuvering
- Consideration given to aborting the operation, and/or moving to a safe holding area until visibility improves.

Safe Speed

Each pilotage act involving towage shall be carried out at a safe speed. In determining safe speed the following should be taken into account:

- Minimum maneuvering speed of the vessel/object being towed
- Capabilities of the assisting towage vessels
- Wind and tidal conditions
- Restricted sea room affecting the maneuverability of assisting towage vessels

Annex 1

Harbour Tug Self-declaration Procedure

Has the Harbour Tug worked within the port authority's jurisdiction within the last 12 months?

Yes – inform dutymarinemanager@cfpa.co.uk who will check previous self-declaration forms and advise if anything further is required.

No – complete a tug self-declaration form and send to shipping@cfpa.co.uk and dutymarinemanager@cfpa.co.uk. The duty marine manager will confirm receipt of the form, and communicate as to whether any additional information or action is required prior to the vessel being permitted to conduct towage operations within the Port Authority's jurisdiction.