

Towage Operations in The Port of St Helier (Towage Guidelines)

Code of Practice

COP 1 - Version 6 – July 2024

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Section 1: Introduction

1. For the purposes of this document “towage” refers to assistance provided to ships and Barges calling at St Helier by tugs operating within the port, whether towing with ship’s own lines or tug’s lines, pushing or standing by.
2. The Harbour Authority will continually risk assess activities within its areas of responsibility and apply appropriate safety control measures to ship movements, this could include a requirement to use of towage.
3. The prime consideration in developing these guidelines is to enhance the safety of those that operate in the ports and to prevent accidents, to enhance good communications and teamwork between towage operators, harbour authorities, Pilots and shipping companies.
4. In compiling these guidelines Pilots, Tug Masters, LORO and RORO Operators have been consulted.
5. These guidelines are made up reflecting the content of article 9 of the PMSC Guide to Good Practice.
6. MAIB accident reports involving towage are assessed as to their relevance and where appropriate amendments made to these guidelines to reflect any recommendations.
7. Notwithstanding anything contained in these Guidelines, the towage requirement for an individual vessel remains the responsibility of the Master. The number of tugs required may be increased when unfavourable conditions exist or when the handling characteristics of the vessel are in doubt. The Master may, in appropriate circumstances, and with the prior approval of the Pilot and / or Harbour Master, decrease the number of tugs recommended. It should be noted however, that in cases where the vessel’s Master refuses to accept the Pilot’s, or in advance of the Pilot being embarked, the Duty Pilot’s advice in respect of the number of tugs required to facilitate a safe operation, the Harbour Master may impose the required number of tugs by special direction. These tugs will be for the ship owner’s account.




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Section 2: Communication

Initial communication between the tug and tow should be on VHF channel 14 then change to a working inter-ship channel, normally VHF channel 11. Whilst towage operations are on-going, the VTS VHF channel 14 must also be monitored.

In the event of a failure of communications, or other emergency, requiring the tug to break away from the vessel being assisted, a sound signal consisting of Morse Code X-RAY () shall be made.

Tug control orders should be kept short, clear and concise. If you are in doubt as to the order, tell the tug master what you want to achieve, and he will assist you.

As in all communications with other parties, the tug should repeat back your order to ensure all parties have received and understood.

Standard Orders for Manoeuvring

- Standby, no weight.
- Push on,% (percentage of bollard pull).
- All stop, breakaway.

Section 3: Visibility

1. Minimum visibility for all towage operations is such that the Master/Pilot can see the tug and the Tug Master can see the towed vessel's wheelhouse. This is considered to be:
 - For ship assist towage in St Helier Inner Harbour – 150m
 - For ship assist towage in the Elizabeth Harbour - 300m
 - For ship assist towage in La Collette Tanker Berth – 500m
2. Should visibility fall below the minimum once a towage operation has commenced, the Master/Pilot shall immediately reduce speed to a minimum safe speed and, if safe to do so, take all way off the vessel. Following discussion with the Tug Master, the contingency plan agreed at the planning stage should be implemented.

Section 4: Tug Operations

1. When a tug is involved in towage all her watertight and weather tight doors must be closed and secured.
2. When charter tugs are used for specific operations, or to relieve the port's own tug, the charter tug's capability will need to be fully assessed, including its certification and manning, prior to it being used. Risk assessments and procedures must also be reviewed, and the charter tug's Master must be fully familiar with these guidelines. Due to the navigational hazards on the approach to the port and the large range of tide experienced, the charter tug may be required to carry a Pilot or suitably experienced, Local Knowledge Endorsement certificate holder, as determined by any risk assessment.
3. All towage within the jurisdiction of The Harbour Authority is undertaken in accordance with the Port Marine Safety Code Guide to Good Practices.
4. Given the exposed entrance and confined layout of St. Helier Harbour, it is the normal, and preferred, practice that towage is provided by pushing the vessel without making fast.
5. For details about the range of Ports of Jersey towage assets available, visit our website: [Marine Services | Ports of Jersey](#)

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Section 5: Risk Assessments

1. Risk assessments exist for routine towage operations and are available on request.
2. All other and non-routine towage operations are to be risk assessed on a case-by-case basis. The checklist provided in Annex 2 should be consulted in the production of such as risk assessment.

Section 6: Routine and Non-Routine Towage Procedures

Routine Towage Operations

The towage operations which are conducted most frequently are considered routine operations. The typical procedures for these operations are in annex 2 of these guidelines and include:

- Regular conventional ferries arriving at the Elizabeth Harbour in strong winds.
- Regular tankers (all sizes) arriving and departing La Collette Tanker Berth during calm weather conditions.
- Regular tankers arriving at La Collette Tanker Berth in strong winds.
- Regular ships operating within St Helier Inner Harbour
- Pushing high speed vessels arriving or departing in adverse weather conditions.

Non-routine Towage Operations

These guidelines shall apply to vessels, barges etc. requiring non routine towage including but not limited to Dead Tows (cold move), towing of unusual or large objects and subject to compulsory pilotage.

- All non-routine towage operations must be risk assessed as detailed above and planned using the Checklist for Tug Assistance (see Annex 1). This process would normally be carried out by the duty Pilot & Tug Master. The Maritime Operations Manager should be consulted as to the appropriateness of the planned operation. All planning and risk assessment documentation must be kept for future reference.
- A Pilot should be embarked on a vessel over 35m engaged in a planned, non-routine towage operation to facilitate the execution of the plan and assist with communication.
- A routine operation can become non-routine if it differs from the plan for any reason.
- If the nature of an operation changes whilst it is in progress, the Tug Masters must use their experience and training to ensure the safety of their vessel and crew as well as continuing to provide assistance where possible.
- When the Harbour Authority are advised that a “new” ship is expected, the ship’s Agent and/or Owners are required to provide the port with a copy of its Pilot Card and to complete a “New Ship Arrival Form”. This is to allow a formal pilotage RA of the ship to be carried out. This RA could impose towage control measures on the vessel’s movement within the port. Alternatively, a request could be received from the ship for towage during its arrival/departure.
- All Pilotage RA’s will be documented and recorded for future reference.
- An updated briefing will take place between the Pilot and the Tug Master prior to the Pilot proceeding to the ship. The RA shall be reviewed to ensure that there is agreement and understanding on the planned towage operation.
- VTS and the Acting Harbourmaster should be briefed prior to the operation taking place so that they are aware of the proposed plan, and they can provide input on other commercial vessel movements.

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Annex 1: Checklist for compiling towage risk assessment

Item	Checked
Bollard pull versus vessel's displacement and windage	
Size, type and manoeuvrability of ships assisted, e.g. tankers, gas carriers, container vessels, ferries etc.	
Communication methods between vessels. (Normally undertaken on VHF channel 14 which is recorded at VTS)	
Historical evidence and experience, including past reports and incidents	
Physical and environmental limitations including tidal streams, wind speeds and directions, and restricted visibility	
Redundancy and back up of equipment	
The geography of the port and its approaches, i.e. its navigational complexity	
Difficulties associated with particular berths, etc, including their condition, and limiting water depths in manoeuvring/approach areas	
Environmentally sensitive areas	
Dead-ship or and declared manoeuvring difficulties	
Preferred method for securing tug, ship's lines or tug's lines from the tow hook or use of the tug's tow winch	
SWL of tow lines	
Abort positions	
Passage planning with particular reference to weather forecasts	
Communications	
Tug positions	
Tug assist methods	
Speed of vessel	
Contingency, including lay berths, anchorages and turning areas	
Tug manning	
Number of pilots involved in the operation, on the ship and on tug or tugs	
Other relevant port and emergency procedures and legislation	

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Annex 2: Routine Operations

Regular Conventional Ferries Arriving at Elizabeth Harbour in Strong SE'ly To SW'ly Winds:

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to stand-by in a location which allows it to position on the ferry's port bow when the ferry comes to a stop.
- Tug to make contact as gently as possible, aft of the ferry's bridge wing on the vertical part of the ferry's side.
- Tug to advise the ferry when in position & push as requested by the ferry Master.
- Tug to stay in position whilst the ferry moves astern.
- Keep sufficient room astern of the tug so that it can escape if plan fails, particularly if the ferry is berthing on the Elizabeth East Berth

Regular Conventional Ferries Arriving at Elizabeth Harbour in Strong NW'ly To NE'ly Winds:

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to stand-by in a location which allows it to follow the ferry into the Elizabeth Harbour
- When the ferry is in a suitable position, tug to lean on ferry's starboard quarter to assist in pushing its stern through the wind.
- Tug to advise the ferry when in position & push as requested by the ferry Master.
- Keep sufficient room astern of the tug so that it can escape if plan fails, particularly if the ferry is berthing on the Elizabeth West Berth
- Ferry Master to allow the tug sufficient time to break away.
- Once clear, the tug to reposition & stand-by on the ferry's port side.
- Tug to advise the ferry when in position & push as requested by the ferry Master.

Regular High-Speed Ferries Arriving at Elizabeth Harbour in Strong Winds:

This routine is for the tug to provide the high-speed vessel with effectively a mobile dolphin and would only occur if the ferry is manoeuvring on only 3 of its 4 engines and strong 30 knots + wind.

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to discuss the positioning with vessels Master.
- Tug to position accordingly.
- Tug to ensure that ferry does not land heavily onto the tug and to use power as necessary to hold ferry in required position as it turns prior to going astern up to its designated berth.

Regular High-Speed Ferries and Conventional Ferries Departing Elizabeth Harbour in Strong Winds:

The routine is for the tug to provide the vessels with effectively a mobile dolphin and would only occur if the ferries are manoeuvring on reduced power and strong 30 knots + wind.

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to discuss the positioning with vessels Master.
- Tug to position accordingly.
- Tug to ensure that ferry does not land heavily onto the tug and to use power as necessary to hold ferry in required position as it turns prior to going
- Ferries to ensure they do not exceed 3 knots whilst the tug is still in position in contact with the vessel.

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Regular Tankers (>80m) Arriving At La Collette Tanker Berth in Strong SE'ly To W'ly Winds

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to stand-by in a location which allows it to position on the tanker's starboard side.
- Tug to position on the tanker's starboard side as it turns to port.
- Tug to advise the tanker when in position & push as requested by the Master/Pilot as the tanker stern boards to the berth.

Regular Tankers (>80m) Arriving At La Collette Tanker Berth in Strong NW'ly To E'ly Winds

Typical assistance routine:

- Tug to stand-by in a location which allows it to position on the tanker's port quarter.
- Tug to position onto the tanker's port quarter.
- Tug to advise the tanker when in position & push as requested by the Master/Pilot as the tanker swings to port.
- Tanker Master/Pilot to allow the tug sufficient time to break away before the tanker's stern enters the basin.

Regular Ships (<90m) Operating Within St Helier Inner Harbour

Typical assistance routine:

- Work boat Halcyon in attendance for pushing operations only.
- Location of Halcyon to be agreed between Halcyon's skipper and vessel's Pilot/Master.
- Halcyon to be on standby before vessel to be served is committed to the small roads.

Halcyon to standby in Elizabeth Harbour area to be ready to assist if required.

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Annex 3: Non Routine Towing Application

Complete form below and email to stheliervts@ports.je at least 24hrs prior to intended move. In addition to this form a copy of the method statement and risk assessment should be attached.

PORTS OF JERSEY - NON-ROUTINE TOWAGE APPLICATION	
PART 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PROJECT MANAGER / AGENT	
Date/Time of intended move:	Agent Name:
Agency:	Contact Number(s):
DETAILS OF THE TOW	
Type of Towage Operation: Dead Ship / Barge / Unusual Object / Other _____	
Towage From:	
Towage To :	
Name / LOA (m) / Breadth (m) / Draught (m)	
Brief Description of Tow	
Is the tow manned	
Are safe boarding arrangements available on each vessel requiring a pilot / crew transfer	
What functioning propulsion /steerage does the tow have:	
Propeller(s) Thruster(s) Rudder(s) None	
Additional Manoeuvring Information / Restrictions	

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DETAILS OF THE TUG(S)

Name(s) / Type (ASD/VS) / LOA / Draft / Power / Bollard Pull / Arrangement

TOWING MASTER (RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF THE MANOEUVRE)

Name :

Rank or Position:

Organisation / Vessel:

Contact Number(s):

METHOD STATEMENT (HOW WILL YOU ACHIEVE THE TOW / TRANSFERS – E.G. PUSH, TOW FROM AHEAD)

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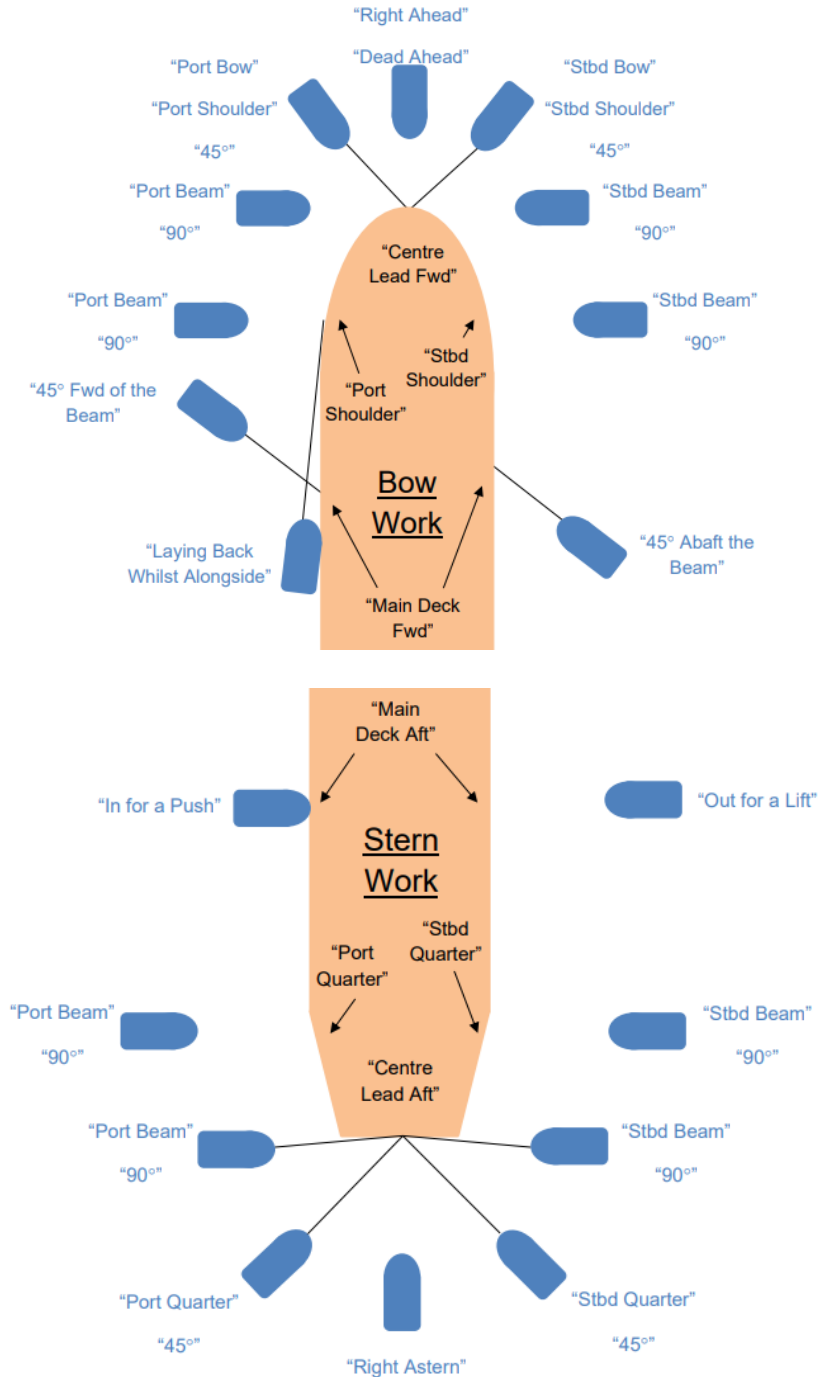
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Annex 4: Tug Positions

Below is a series of diagrams showing various tug positions and phrases used for communication:

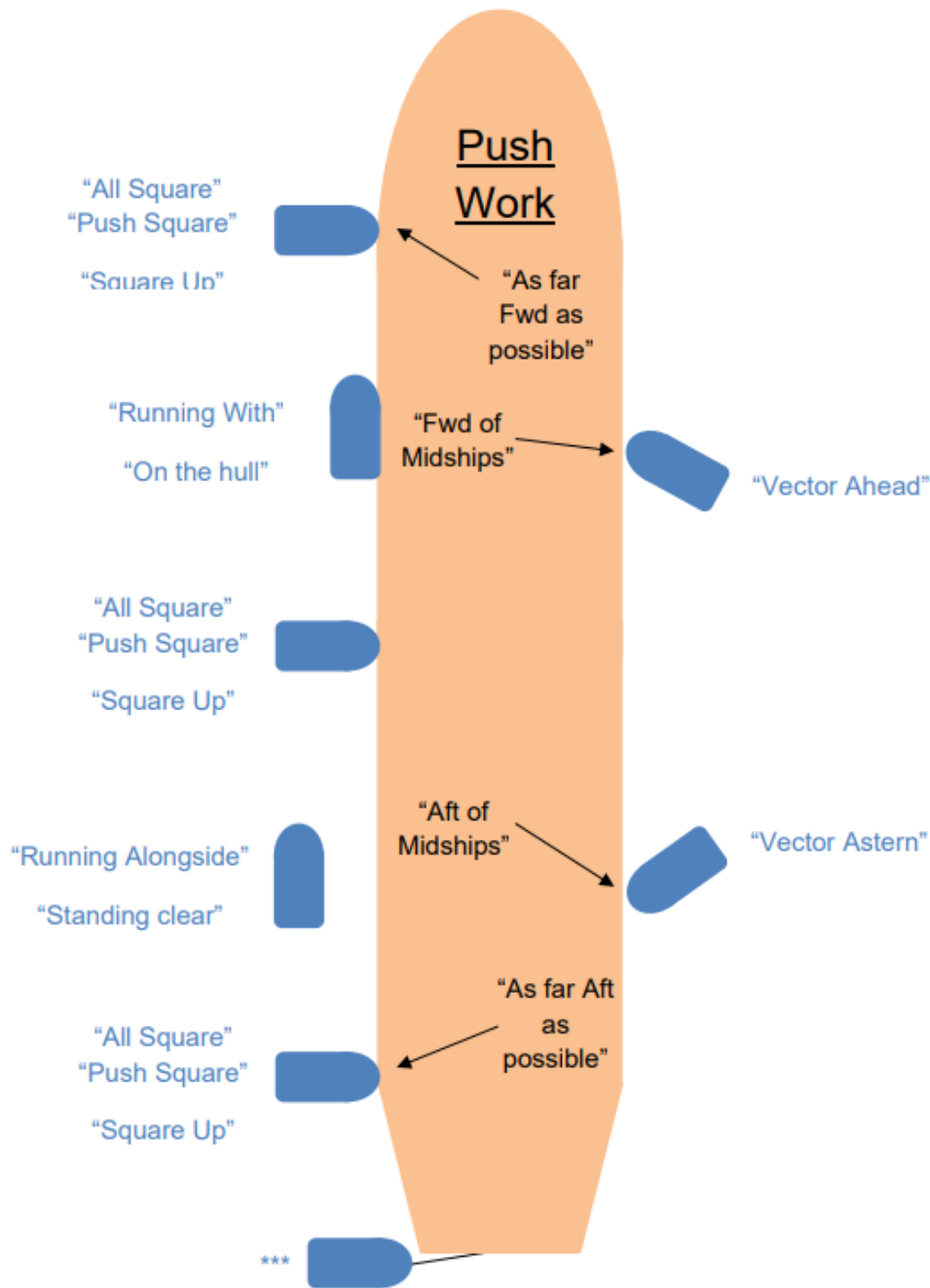
Black text within the ships outline indicates where the tug is made fast.

Blue text next to the tug indicates its position.



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Pushing tugs can be asked to adjust position beyond what's shown above by requesting them to "Move towards the Bow" or "Move towards the Stern". It often works well to give visual targets for the tugs. For example: "Just forward of the accommodation" "In line with the aft deck crane" "Below the funnel"

Pushing tugs will of course still be limited by the flare of the stern, the flare of the bow and "No Tug" marked weak spots

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