



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY

22980 Indian Creek Drive,
Suite 200
Dulles, Virginia 20166, USA
Tel: +1 703 790 3434
Fax: +1 703 790 5655
Email: investigations@liscr.com
Web: www.liscr.com

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Marine Advisory: 32/2025

Subject: HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH TUG LINE HANDLING DURING BERTHING AND UNBERTHING OPERATIONS

Ref:

- (a) [Liberia Marine Notice MLC-005](#)
- (b) **ISM Code Part A, Section 7**
- (c) [IMO MSC.1/Circ.1620 – Guidelines for Inspection and Maintenance of Mooring Equipment including Lines](#)

Dear Shipowners/Operators/Inspectors/Masters/Crew:

The purpose of this Marine Advisory is to draw attention to two serious marine casualties involving crew members aboard Liberian-flagged vessels during tug line operations. These incidents highlight the critical hazards associated with handling messenger and tug lines during berthing and unberthing operations.

Marine Casualties Summaries - Background:

1. First Case occurred while the vessel was departing from a port:

- During tug disconnection, the Bosun's leg was caught in the bight of the messenger line and amputated above the ankle.
- The incident occurred due to uncontrolled release of the line, lack of situational awareness, and failure to secure the line with sufficient turns on the bollard.
- The Chief Officer was involved in line handling instead of supervising, and communication with the bridge team.

2. Second Case occurred while the vessel was berthing in a port:

- A crew member's leg was severed when it passed through the eye of the tug line during release.
- The line was under tension and released manually without adequate control or awareness.
- Emergency response was swift, but the injury was severe and traumatic.

The investigations noted that in both cases, crew members were positioned dangerously close to tensioned lines, supervisory personnel were directly involved in operations rather than overseeing them and communication breakdowns prevented timely coordination with tugs.

The Administration recommends owners, operators, masters, and the crew on Liberian-flag vessels:

1. Review and Amend Safety Procedures:

- Ensure compliance with ISM Code Part A, Section 7 and Liberia Marine Notice MLC-005.
- Conduct formal risk assessments prior to tug line operations.
- Consider implementing work permits for tug line handling tasks.
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2. Enhance Crew Training:

- Provide vessel-specific training on mooring and tug line hazards.
- Include experiential learning and scenario reenactments.
- Reinforce STOP WORK authority and hazard recognition.

3. Improve Supervisory Oversight:

- The officers must maintain visual contact with tug operations.
- Avoid direct involvement in line handling during critical maneuvers.

4. Strengthen Communication Protocols:

- Establish clear hand signals and radio procedures with tug operators.
- Immediately report any operational difficulty to the bridge team.

5. Fleet-wide Awareness:

- Share incident details across the fleet via safety alerts and training platforms.
- Include these cases in pre-joining safety briefings for deck crew.

These Marine Casualties underscore the importance of vigilance, procedural discipline, and effective communication during tug line operations. The Administration urges all operators to take proactive steps to prevent recurrence and ensure the safety of seafarers.

For more information, please contact the Investigations Department at investigations@liscr.com.

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