

Industry Joint Notice on the illegal use of Dangerously Weighted Heaving Lines (DWHL) in UK ports & harbours

To Ship Owners, Masters, Agents and their Principals.

VERSION 2: ISSUED MARCH 2021

The British Ports Association, British Tugowners Association, Port Skills and Safety, UK Chamber of Shipping, UK Harbour Masters Association, UK Major Ports Group, UK Maritime Pilots Association, and Workboat Association hereby jointly issue a notice against the continued illegal use of Dangerously Weighted Heaving Lines (DWHL) in UK ports and harbours.

The use of DWHL is a significant concern to the maritime community, as exemplified by report of their use in the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) Digest 2/2020 as included as Annex A. The use of DWHL when thrown by ship's crew passing mooring ropes or retrieving a messenger line is dangerous and has caused serious injury. DWHL are a significant safety hazard and have the potential to cause serious or fatal injury and cannot be an accepted activity in UK ports and harbours. Indeed, instances could lead to a fine or criminal prosecution of a ship's master.

International and domestic codes are clear and unambiguous on the construction and weight of heaving lines.

The [Code of Safe Working Practice \(CoSWP\) 2020 Amendment](#), Section 26.3.5 states:

“To prevent personal injury to those receiving heaving lines, the ‘monkey’s fist’ should be made with rope only and must not contain added weighting material. Safe alternatives include a small high-visibility soft pouch, filled with fast-draining pea shingle or similar, with a weight of not more than 0.5 kg. Under no circumstances is a line to be weighted by items such as shackles, bolts or nuts, or twist locks.”

The [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) Code of Practice – Safety and Health in Ports](#), Section 6.13, Mooring Operations, Para 357 states:

“A “monkey’s fist” at the end of a heaving line should only be made of rope. Additional weights should never be added to it.”

The signatories call for ship owners, managers, agents, port operators and pilots to assist in eradicating the use of DWHL by the following:

- 1) Informing all incoming vessels of their duty to follow the Code of Safe Working Practices (COSWP)
- 2) Issuing them with MCA Safety Bulletin No. 2 – Annex B
- 3) Stressing that fines, Port State Control Inspections, and criminal prosecution are likely, especially should a vessel persist in their use.

All stakeholders can play an important role in preventing the use of anything other than a rope monkey's fist or alternative soft safety pouch. By promoting and raising the issue with all parties with a vested interest bad practice can be eliminated.

The agreed procedure for reporting incidents involving DWHL to the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) for enforcement action for both UK flagged, and non-UK flagged vessels is at Annex C.

MCA Regional Marine Office contact details for reporting.

Central & West Scotland	GlasgowMO@mcga.gov.uk
North & East Scotland	AberdeenMO@mcga.gov.uk
North West England	LiverpoolMO@mcga.gov.uk
North East England	HullMO@mcga.gov.uk
Thames & East England	ColchesterMO@mcga.gov.uk
South England	SouthamptonMO@mcga.gov.uk
Southwest England	PlymouthMO@mcga.gov.uk
Wales & West England	CardiffMO@mcga.gov.uk
Northern Ireland	BelfastMO@mcga.gov.uk

Regional Boundaries for Marine Offices may be viewed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873565/S_ITP_National_Corrected2.pdf

Joint Signatories



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Ballantyne".

Richard Ballantyne
Chief Executive
British Ports Association



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Baker".

Scott Baker
Chairman
British Tugowners Association



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Steele".

Richard Steele
Chief Executive
Ports Skills & Safety



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Sanguinetti".

Bob Sanguinetti
Chief Executive Officer
UK Chamber of Shipping



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ashley Nicholson".

Ashley Nicholson
President
UK Harbour Masters Association



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy Morris".

Tim Morris
Chief Executive
UK Major Ports Group



United Kingdom
Maritime Pilots' Association

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Morris".

Mike Morris
Chairman
UK Maritime Pilots
Association



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Forster".

Kerrie Forster
Chief Executive
Workboat Association

Another Weighted Heaving Line

Narrative

A chemical/products tanker was entering harbour with a pilot embarked on a breezy, rainy night. A tug was standing by and was ordered by the pilot to secure its tow line. The tug master manoeuvred close to the port bow, ready to receive a heaving line from the ship.

The deckhand stood to one side of the tug's aft deck and indicated to the ship's mooring party that he was ready for them to throw the heaving line. The line was thrown, and the end

landed on the tug's deck with a loud bang. Attached to the end of the line was a heavy 0.5kg steel shackle (Figure 1).

The deckhand removed the shackle from the heaving line and continued to pass the tow. The berthing continued without further incident. The tug master informed the pilot of the incident, and the tug provided two bean bags to the ship as alternative, safe weighting for heaving lines (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Steel shackle used as heaving line weight



Figure 2: Bean bag supplied by tug company as a safe alternative heaving line weight

The Lessons

1. Fortunately, the deckhand was standing to one side of the deck and the shackle landed away from him. He was wearing a hard hat, but a shackle dropped or thrown from height might well have caused serious injury despite this, and would certainly have caused an injury if it had struck any unprotected part of his body. Under no circumstances is a line to be weighted by items such as shackles, bolts, nuts or twist locks. The only safe options are rope-only 'monkey's fists' or a 'bean bag', provided the weight is no more than 0.5kg.
2. This tug company has a no-tolerance policy to dangerously weighted heaving lines, removing weights and reporting incidents. It backs this up by keeping supplies of bean bags on its tugs, and crews supply safe alternatives to any ship using dangerously weighted lines. This approach is to be commended.

Annex B:

MCA Published Safety Bulletin No. 2 Dangerously Weighted Ships Heaving Lines – [Accessible Here](#).

MSF 5029 Rev 10/14



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

SAFETY BULLETIN

No. 2

DANGEROUSLY WEIGHTED SHIPS HEAVING LINES

There have been several instances where dangerously weighted heaving lines, including the use of monkey's fists with additional weights inserted into them, have been used resulting in serious injury. Further guidance is contained in Ch 26 section 26.3.5 in the 2015 edition of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers.



Vessels using dangerously weighted heaving lines in the UK may be subject to prosecution

MSF 5029 Rev 10/1

To arrange a subscription to future Safety Bulletins go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-coastguard-agency-mca-safety-bulletins> For further information please contact Ship Safety Branch, Maritime & Coastguard Agency Tel: +44 (0) 2380 329 100
Issued: 28 September 2015

Annex C:

Actions on Receipt of a Report: Non-UK Flagged Ships

1. **First Offence.** Operator/Port Harbour Authority to **report the incident to the nearest MCA Marine Office via email** who will record details of the event on a UK wide database. Contents of the database will be reviewed by the UK Port Marine Safety Code Steering Group and MAIB.
2. Incidents resulting in injuries to personnel - the ship should be considered for inspection in the normal manner.
3. Incidents resulting in no reported injuries to personnel - the Marine Office to initiate stepped approach.
4. Notice of the incident to be sent to the ship owner/operator, via the agent (preferably by email), highlighting the event.
5. Marine Office to maintain a recording system of all correspondence to/from agent/ship owner/operator to help recognise repeat offenders.
6. **Second Offence by the same ship.** Marine Office to refer the incident to the MCA Inspection Operations Team and enter an unexpected factor message in THETIS. Ship considered for inspection.
7. **Third Offence by the same ship.** Marine Office to refer the incident to the Regulatory Compliance Investigation (formally Enforcement) Team to consider appropriate enforcement action. Inspection Operations Team to be kept in the copy.

Actions on Receipt of a Report: UK Flagged Ships

1. **First Offence.** Operator/Port Harbour Authority to **report the incident to the nearest MCA Marine Office via email** who will record details of the event on a UK wide database. Contents of the database will be reviewed by the UK Port Marine Safety Code Steering Group and MAIB.
2. Incidents resulting in injuries to personnel - the ship should be considered for inspection in the normal manner.
3. Incidents resulting in no reported injuries to personnel - the Marine Office to initiate stepped approach.
4. Notice of the incident to be sent to the ship owner/operator, via the agent (preferably by email) highlighting the event.

5. Marine Office to maintain a recording system of all correspondence to/from agent/ship owner/operator to help recognise repeat offenders.
6. Marine Office to follow this up or by referral to the MCA Customer Service Manager (CSM) on case-by-case basis.
7. **Second Offence by the same ship** - Marine Office to refer the incident to the MCA Inspection Operations Team. Ship considered for inspection. Marine Office or MCA Customer Services Manager to notify the shipping company Designated Person to discuss the issue and agree a corrective action plan.
8. **Third Offence by the same ship** – Marine Office to refer the incident to the Regulatory Compliance Investigation (formally Enforcement) Team to consider appropriate enforcement action. Inspection Operations Team to be kept in the copy.