

Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee
Harbor Safety Plan | Chapter 5

DEAD SHIP TOW GUIDELINES

CHANGE LOG:

Changes Made	Sub-Committee	Date Approved
Chapter was simplified and updated.	Harbor Safety Committee	11/15/23

A. Dead Ship Tows

1. General Information

The tow of a dead ship – a ship lacking sufficient means of self-propulsion or with malfunctioning steering gear – requires advance planning, additional towing resources and special attention. While towing companies engage in tows on an almost daily basis, dead ship tows warrant additional safety measures. The specifics of these guidelines are not intended for towing companies involved in their normal day-to-day operations for which other industry and company standards likely already apply.

This guidance establishes good marine practices for conducting dead ship tows that are designed to mitigate associated safety risks.

2. Authorities

The Ports and Waterways Act (33 USC 1221) authorizes the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to regulate the movement of dead ships for the purposes of maintaining safety on the navigable waterways of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

3. References

NVIC 8-94 Federal Pilotage Requirements

4. Enclosures:

- a. Dead Ship Tow Application
- b. Towing Vessel Information
- c. Inspection Checklist for Dead Ship Tow Evolutions

5. Guidance

The owner, operator, agent, master or person in charge of the dead-ship tow evolution shall notify Sector Columbia River as early as possible, but no less than 72 hours, prior to the scheduled movement.

Emergency situations shall be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Dead-ships shifting between berths within the Columbia or Willamette Rivers may be exempt from this guidance if approved by the Sector Columbia River Commanding Officer.

Towing companies contracted to conduct dead-ship tows of vessels, other than barges, greater than or equal to 150 feet in length, or otherwise applicable by the COTP, shall submit a dead-ship tow plan as early as possible, but no less than 72 hours, prior to the scheduled movement date.

Weather conditions for entering or departing the river system should not exceed Beauford Scale Force 5 without consultation with the pilots – 21 knot winds and 10 ft seas.

Inbound transits must be timed to best take advantage of daylight & flood tide. All other movements must be timed to best take advantage of daylight.

Consultation shall be made with bar and river pilots to determine the safest pilot and tug configuration. Referring to the Vessels being Towed section of NVIC 8-94, these standards should apply to all dead ship tow evolutions in the Lower Columbia Region.



Coast Guard Sector Columbia River Dead Ship Tow Application

Company/Agency Name		
Point of Contact		
Phone Number	OFFICE:	MOBILE:
Fax Number		
Email Address		
Responsible Party Phone	OFFICE:	MOBILE:
VESSEL INFORMATION		
Vessel Name		
Class/Type/Designation		
Length		
Beam		
Draft		
Air Draft		
Displacement		
Flag		
Documentation # (if any)		
TOWING INFORMATION		
Origin		
Destination*		
Departure Date & Time		
Purpose		
Estimated Dist/Duration		
Description of Transit (route, waypoints, etc)		
Havens of Safe Refuge		
* If crossing COTP zone boundaries, concurrent approval is required.		



TOWING INFORMATION (Cont.)					
Type	Alongside		Pushing Ahead		Astern
	Surge Chain			Long Catenary	
Diameter of Tow Wire					
Length of Tow Wire					
Emerg. Wires Rigged	Location:			Type:	
Towing Condition	Single Drum			Double Drum	
Length & Position of Tows					
Diagram:					

TOWING VESSEL INFORMATION		
Vessel Name		
Documentation #		
Length		
Beam		
Horsepower		
Gross Tonnage		
Crew Information		
Name	Position	License
ASSIST TUG(S) INFORMATION		
Vessel Name		
Documentation #		
Horsepower		
Vessel Name		
Documentation #		
Horsepower		
ADDITIONAL NOTES		

Inspection Checklist for Dead-Ship Tow (DST) Evolutions

- ☐ Review the vessel's history and documents prior to the inspection to determine any issues regarding watertight integrity, stability, and structural issues.
- ☐ Ensure tail shaft(s) is locked to prevent freewheeling and vibration unless requested and approved in tow plan.
- ☐ Ensure rudder is locked unless approved in the tow plan. A marine surveyor or Coast Guard inspector must verify adequacy of a rudder lock if used.
- ☐ Ensure all large, loose gear is secured. including portable flammable/pressurized gas tanks, large machinery, etc.
- ☐ Ensure all cranes/booms are lashed and secured.
- ☐ Ensure all hatch covers are sufficiently secured and inspected for watertight integrity.
- ☐ Ensure all double bottoms/voids/cofferdams are secured.
- ☐ Ensure all watertight subdivision doors and hatches are secured.
- ☐ Ensure all watertight doors above decks are secured.
- ☐ Ensure all air ports and side ports are secured.
- ☐ Ensure all sea valves are closed and secured with wire or lock. If a generator is available to run basic ships facilities the sea valves should remain open.
- ☐ Ensure forepeak tank does not carry any fuel; all covers to this tank are to be secured.
- ☐ Ensure no fuel for the tug(s) is carried onboard.
- ☐ Ensure free surface effects are minimized.
- ☐ Ensure list and trim conditions do not exceed limitations of vessel.
- ☐ Ensure navigation lights and day-shapes are properly rigged and functioning.
- ☐ Ensure navigation bridge visibility regulations are met.
- ☐ Ensure qualified crew are onboard to rig pilot ladder, oversee pilot transfers, make up assist tugs, handle lines when docking/undocking and rig accommodation ladder.
- ☐ Ensure adequate means of relief (operating head, portable toilet, etc.) and protection from the weather are available to personnel onboard the vessel.
- ☐ Ensure electrical power is available on the navigation bridge to charge PPUs, VHF radios, etc.
- ☐ Ensure a source of heat is available on the navigation bridge during winter months.

Exceptions/Notes: _____

Completed by: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____