

Towage is largely split into three main groups of exposure:

- Harbour – berthing assistance & repositioning within harbour limits
- Dead-ship – ocean tow of a disabled or salvaged vessel
- Tug & Barge operations – ocean & coastal towage as the principal commercial activity.

For the purposes of this newsletter, we will focus on Tug & Barge operations although many of the risk properties will apply to all three groups to a greater or lesser degree.

To a large extent, towage is a simpler and more efficient way of moving awkward or oversized cargoes. Weight, size & dimensions may combine with a relatively remote location &/or lack of suitable harbour infrastructure to make tug & barge delivery the only viable & most cost effective option.

Towing is a complicated procedure which requires particular focus on the stresses exerted on the Tug, Barge and the tow cable connecting the two vessels. The parting of a tow cable at sea can lead to a difficult and dangerous re-connection process &/or lead to the loss of the towed vessel (barge & cargo).

In addition, the towed vessel will usually be unmanned and has no motive power. This means that it will be very susceptible to the elements (wind, tide & sea state). Stability can also be a significant consideration where the barge is loaded with cargo.

A number of specific risk criteria must be focussed on to adequately assess ocean towage exposures & set any initial/additional premium:

- the barge needs to be capable of carrying the cargo – size & dimension has a direct correlation to centre of gravity & stability
- the tug requires sufficient power to tow the barge (often expressed as the “*bollard pull*”)
- detailed route planning is necessary to ensure the cumbersome tow has adequate



sea room to maneuver & a contingency plan in the event of bad weather (port of refuge).

A marine surveyor specialising in towage will be engaged to complete a “Tug, Tow & Towage” survey to ensure all exposure aspects have been attended to. The surveyor will issue a ‘towage approval certificate’ as confirmation.

The surveyor’s focus will be concentrated on:

- weather prior to and during the voyage
- tow line set-up & configuration
- confirmation of tug capability & crew experience - includes sufficient fuel, spare parts & spare tow equipment
- appropriate towing lights & day signals (as required by International law)
- cargo securing & tow stability (where cargo is carried).

For longer voyages the surveyor will monitor & report on the progress of the tow including - position, speed, sea state & weather, fuel consumption & endurance, estimated arrival.

Vero has many years experience insuring Towage risks of all kinds.

Contact us if you would like additional information.

**The Team at Vero Marine and Aviation**