

PROVISIONAL LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Towing Voyage Survey

Introduction

Under the current practice, for the issue of port clearance to a non self-propelled vessel leaving Hong Kong to other area/country under tow, the tug and tow are required to undergo a towing voyage survey conducted by HKMD surveyor. The purpose of this towing voyage survey is to ensure that the vessels and their towing arrangement are fit for the intended voyage.

2. Towing voyage surveys have been carried out by MD over a long period in past decades. Majority of the towing voyages are short voyages involving local vessels being towed to adjacent ports in the Mainland to facilitate vessel repairs etc. Only on few occasions that ocean towing to other countries, such as Singapore and Indonesia, are required. Regular clients such as shipping agents, towage and salvage companies etc. are well familiarized with the application procedures, survey and documentation requirements. So far there is hardly any indication that accidents had been caused by inadequate towing voyage preparation and arrangement.

Scope of Towing Voyage Survey

3. The items to be covered under the towing voyage survey include:
- (a) Navigation signals and lights on both vessels and the power supply on the tow;
 - (b) Load line items and closing appliances on the tow to ensure watertight integrity;
 - (c) Securing and protection arrangements for any cargo, equipment and stores on board the tow;
 - (d) Ensuring suitable draught and adequate stability of the tow;
 - (e) Emergency anchoring arrangement;
 - (f) Lifesaving and fire fighting appliances for emergency use;
 - (g) Boarding facilities in case the tow needs to be boarded;
 - (h) Adequacy of towing equipment and emergency towing arrangement;
 - (i) Voyage plan.

Proposed Change

4. With a view to allowing shipowners more flexibility in choosing other non-government professional bodies to survey their vessels, it is proposed that towing voyage surveys (with declaration) conducted by classification societies and Registered Professional Engineers (Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture discipline) (“RPE”) appointed as Authorized Surveyors under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessel) Ordinance be accepted by MD for issuing port clearance to vessels under tow leaving Hong Kong, instead of requiring such surveys to be conducted by MD surveyors.

5. In considering that there is substantial difference in risk levels and competence/support requirement in conducting survey between vessels engaging on coastal towage and ocean towage, it is further proposed that:

- (a) for short distance coastal towing voyages ^(Note 1) to Mainland ports within Chinese waters extending from Guangxi to Xiamen (including Macau), surveys conducted by either classification societies or RPE as “authorized surveyor” could be accepted;
- (b) for long distance coastal towing voyages ^(Note 1) to Mainland ports within Chinese waters extending from Xiamen to Liaoning, surveys conducted by classification societies would be accepted;
- (c) for ocean towing voyages to countries other than China, only surveys conducted by classification societies would be accepted.

6. To ensure that the survey by these professional bodies can adequately cover the safety of the tug and tow for the intended voyage, MD will demand the attending surveyor to complete a declaration with a checklist, before issuing port clearance to the vessels. A copy of the declaration is annexed to this paper for members’ reference ^(Note 2). For ocean towage, classification societies will be required to take into account the guidance provide in IMO circular MSC Circ. 884, which provides comprehensive guidelines on international ocean towing operation.

Note 1 *Reference made to para. 2.1 (15) on “Coastal Class “A” plying zone” and (16) on “Coastal Class :B” plying zone” of Main Principles, and para. 2.1 of Section 1 of Chapter 1 of the draft “Code of Practice- Safety and Technical Standard of Coastal Cargo Vessels” (PLVAC Paper 28/04) which was endorsed by Provisional Local Vessels Advisory Committee (PLVAC) on 17 December 2004.*

Note 2 *Guidance notes on survey items including nautical items will be provided in the MD Notice promulgated for this issue to facilitate conducting the Towing Voyage Survey for coastal towing operation.*

7. The proposed change of practice is in line with the government's policy in outsourcing. The above-mentioned acceptance criteria can also ensure that safety will not be compromised. The time to effect the change of practice would be immediately after the commencement of the LVO when Authorized Surveyors are being appointed.

Advice Sought

8. This paper has been submitted recently to Port Operations Committee (POC) and the proposed changes were supported and endorsed by the members of POC. Since a good proportion of towing surveys were conducted for coastal towage involving local vessels, PLVAC Members' endorsement or comment is sought on the above proposed changes. Upon endorsement by members, a MD Notice will be issued to inform all parties concerned on the new arrangement in due course.

*Shipping Division
Marine Department
October 2006*

To: Licensing and Port Formalities Section
 Hong Kong Marine Department
 Harbour Building
 38 Pier Road, Central
 HONG KONG
 Tel: 2852 3080
 Fax:2545 1535

Application for Port Clearance on Towing Voyage

(To be completed/confirmed by Towing Master)

Name of Towing Vessel : _____ License / Registration No. _____

Name of Vessel(s) being towed : _____ License / Registration No. _____

Name of Vessel(s) being towed : _____ License / Registration No. _____

Particulars of towing voyage

Destination : _____

Estimated time/date of Departure : _____ Estimated time/date of Arrival : _____

No. of hours required for Towing : _____ Fuel required for the voyage : _____

I attach a copy of "Declaration of Survey for Towing Voyage " in connection with subject application. The following recommendations for vessels engaged in Towing Operations have been read and understood by me and I undertake to comply with the same.

Signed : _____

Towing Master

M.V. _____

Date : _____

(Towing Vessel with stamp)

Recommendations for vessels engaged in Towing Operations

- (1) Towing Master should ensure navigation lights or shapes are properly displayed to indicate the towing operation.
- (2) The voyage should proceed only when there is a favorable weather forecast. Towing Master should aware the onset of bad weather particularly in respect of arrangements for heaving to or taking shelter.
- (3) The vessel being towed should remain unmanned, except in emergency, for the duration of the voyage.
- (4) Proper lookout under the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972, as amended (Rule 5) should be maintained.
- (5) When appropriate the rudder of the vessel being towed should be secured in the amidships position and measures are to be taken to prevent the propeller shaft from turning.
- (6) To reduce the risk of pollution, the amount of oil carried on the tow should be limited to what is required for the safety of the tow and for its normal operation.

To: Director of Marine
 Hong Kong Marine Department
 c/o: Master of Towing Vessel as named at below

Declaration of Survey for Towing Voyage

Port / country* of Licence / Registration* of Towing Vessel : _____

Name of Towing Vessel : _____ Licence / Registration No. _____

Name of Vessel(s) being towed : _____ Licence / Registration No. _____

Name of Vessel(s) being towed : _____ Licence / Registration No. _____

No.	Survey Items for <u>Towing Vessel</u>	Y/N	Remark (If any)
1	Valid certificates/licenses for towing vessel for the intended voyage		
2	Valid certificates/licenses for Master, Engineer		
3	Updated nautical charts for the intended voyage		
4	Appropriate navigational lights, shapes & radio equipment in working condition		
5	Appropriate fire-fighting & lifesaving appliances in working condition		
6	Towing & emergency/spare towing gear and arrangement in working condition		
7	Sufficient fuel for the intended voyage		
	Survey Items for <u>Vessel(s) being towed</u>		
8	Vessels(s) are seaworthy for the intended voyage		
9	Drafts of vessels are checked with adequate intact stability		
10	Appropriate navigation lights and shapes in working condition		
11	Sufficient batteries capacity for navigational lights for the intended voyage		
12	Spare light bulbs for navigating lights available		
13	Closing arrangement for deck openings in satisfactory condition and secured properly		
14	Cargo, equipment & store are properly secured		
15	Equipped with anchor for emergency use		
16	Boarding facilities are properly rigged on the tow		

Note : All check boxes should be filled as appropriate

The undersigned declares that the towing survey has been carried out including those items as stipulated in the checklist above as applicable and found satisfactory.

It is recommended a Port Clearance to be issued to the subject vessels for the towing operation.

Remark (if any)

Signed : _____
 (Name of attending Surveyor) ^(note 1)

_____ (*RPE registration No./Name of recognized Classification Society)

* delete where not applicable

Date : _____

Note 1 : Surveyor of recognized classification society or Registered Professional Engineer (Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture discipline) ("RPE") appointed as Authorized Surveyor under Cap 548, as appropriate.