

FORTH PORTS LIMITED

P No. 7 of 1998

19 June 1998

PERMANENT NOTICE TO MARINERS
FIRTH OF FORTH

SAFE HANDING OF TOWLINES

1. An accident in the Firth of Forth area resulted in a crewman losing his leg as a result of standing in the bight of a messenger line when the after tug was let go. A subsequent incident involved a forward tug having to physically part the messenger line after it had become fouled about two feet from the ship's fairlead whilst being released.

Both the above occurred whilst tugs were leaving outward bound vessels but there has also been an incident during the securing of a tug to an inward vessel. On this occasion, the tug's wire was dropped from a height of about 15 metres onto the foredeck of the tug. It appeared that the ship's crew had lost control of the messenger.

2. In light of the foregoing, the crew of tug assisted ships are to be reminded of the dangers of loose towlines, messengers, etc., on deck, especially when tugs are being let go. In particular, they are to be warned of the dangers and to stand out and clear of bights in accordance with The Code of Safe Working Practices, Article 16.3.11.

Tug Masters are reminded that no weight should be put onto a towline, messenger or heaving line until such time as the last of them is clear of the assisted ship and confirmed by visual sighting.

Every effort should be made to slack back tug's lines using the messenger and to lower the line as far as possible, in a controlled manner onto the tug's deck. This requires good supervision, communications and clear hand signals where they can best be seen by both ship's and tug's crew.

In the event of a tug having to proceed away from the assisted ship before all lines are clear, it is imperative that the Tug Master inform the officer supervising the ship's crew of the intended actions and movements of the tug.

J.W. Simpson,
CHIEF HARBOUR MASTER
FIRTH OF FORTH