



Marine Safety Information Bulletin 26-003
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY



**U. S. Coast Guard
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Dead Ship Tow Guidance

This bulletin supersedes MSIB 20-001 and applies to dead ship movements within or transiting through the Sector Honolulu Captain of the Port Zone.

Purpose. This bulletin provides updated guidance on when the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Captain of the Port (COTP) Sector Honolulu will generally require the submission of a dead ship tow plan. This guidance clarifies that dead ship tow plans are typically for planned dead ship movements and are required as a mitigation measure for when a proposed tow **may** create a hazardous condition.

Disclaimer. This bulletin is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide guidance to the maritime industry and is not intended to, nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

Background. Dead ship movements occur for various reasons, from shipyard transits to post-salvage operations, and each movement is unique. The COTP is responsible for the safety of all navigable waterways throughout the Sector Honolulu Area of Responsibility. Irregular operations, such as dead ship movements, may inherently carry more safety risks than routine transits, and there are many factors to consider to protect life, property, the environment, and commerce.

Federal law, specifically the Ports and Waterways Safety Act (PWSA), codified in 46 U.S.C. Chapter 700, grants the Coast Guard authority to ensure the safety and environmental protection of U.S. ports and waterways. This authority allows the COTP to control vessel traffic and direct the movement of any vessel that may pose a “hazardous condition.” The PWSA Section 202 defines a hazardous condition as “any condition that may adversely affect the safety of any vessel, bridge, structure, or shore area or the environmental quality of any port, harbor, or navigable waterway of the United States. It may, but need not, involve collision, allision, fire, explosion, grounding, leaking, damage, injury or illness of a person aboard, or manning-shortage.”

When a Dead Ship Tow Plan is Required

The Sector Honolulu COTP will require a dead ship tow plan when a risk assessment of the proposed dead ship movement indicates it **may** create a hazardous condition. This decision is based on the following risk factors with example criteria:

1. **Vessel Characteristics:** Vessel size relative to the waterway (e.g. width to beam ratio). Vessel condition (e.g., structural integrity, long period of inactivity).
2. **Pollution Potential:** Quantities of fuel, oil, or other hazardous materials onboard and potential for discharge.

3. **Voyage Complexity:** Does the proposed route involve narrow channels, high-traffic areas or critical commercial ports? Will the tow pass through environmentally sensitive areas? How long is the proposed voyage and what is the potential to encounter adverse weather?
4. **Towing & Safety:** What are the characteristics of the towing vessel? What is the proposed towing configuration? What safety systems are operable on the dead ship (e.g. anchoring equipment, portable dewatering pumps? Will the dead ship be manned?

Illustrative Scenarios. To provide further clarity, consider the following examples:

1. **Tow Plan UNLIKELY Required (Low Risk):** A small, recently recovered vessel with all pollutants removed, being towed a short distance during calm weather.
2. **Tow Plan LIKELY Required (High Risk):** The owner of a deep draft vessel sitting idle for a few years desiring to tow the vessel into Honolulu Harbor for dry docking.

Action.

1. Owners, agents, and other parties who plan to conduct a dead ship tow through or within the Sector Honolulu COTP Zone should take every precaution to ensure that the dead ship tow is conducted in a safe manner.
2. If the Coast Guard requires submission of a dead ship tow plan, a template can be found in Appendix A. Email your completed plan to the Sector Honolulu Waterways Management Division at SecHonoWaterWays@uscg.mil. Submit your plan at least 96 hours (4 days) before the planned tow. If you cannot meet this deadline for any reason, please call the Sector Honolulu Waterways Management Division duty phone immediately at (808) 291-2923.
3. The Coast Guard does not "approve" tow plans. Instead, the Coast Guard reviews them to ensure the hazardous condition has been properly mitigated. If your plan is sufficient, the Coast Guard will issue a "no objection." This means you are clear to proceed. If the plan has gaps or missing information, the Coast Guard will provide you with feedback on what needs to be addressed.
4. Any questions, comments, or suggestions for changes regarding this Bulletin should be directed to the Sector Honolulu Waterways Management Division at SecHonoWaterWays@uscg.mil.

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Appendix A: Dead Ship Tow Plan Template

The complexity of a dead ship movement determines the amount and type of information needed for the COTP to make an informed risk assessment of whether the hazardous condition of a dead ship movement has been mitigated. Not all information may be applicable to each dead ship movement.

Section 1: Dead ship and owner/agency details:

1. Dead ship owner or agency:
 - a. DSM representative name.
 - b. DSM representative contact information.
2. Dead ship:
 - a. Name.
 - b. Official number or documentation number.
 - c. Vessel owner/operator.
 - d. Vessel class/type/designation.
 - e. Call sign.
 - f. Flag.
 - g. Length, breadth, depth.
 - h. Navigational draft.
 - i. Air draft.
 - j. Displacement.
 - k. Location, soundings, and quantities of oil and hazmat.
 - l. Points of attachment.
 - m. Ability of the vessel to anchor, maintain emergency lighting, and establish
 - n. capstan/windless operations
 - o. Condition and operability of firefighting and dewatering equipment.
 - p. The number of personnel who are to remain on the moved vessel during the evolution and the type and location of primary lifesaving equipment for each person should the dead ship be manned.
 - q. Depending on the type of movement (i.e., from anchorage to pier for repair or voyage over 100 nm) these conditions might or might not be warranted:
 - i. The dead ship's tailshaft(s) locked to prevent freewheeling and vibration.
 - ii. The rudder locked.
 - iii. All large, loose gear secured.
 - iv. All cranes/booms secured.
 - v. All hatch covers secured. All double bottom/voids/cofferdam hatches secured.
 - vi. All watertight subdivision doors and hatches secured.
 - vii. All watertight doors above deck secured.
 - viii. All air ports and side ports secured.
 - ix. All sea valves closed and secured with wire.
 - x. Forepeak tank secured, with no fuel in tank.
 - xi. Free surface effect minimized.
 - xii. Proper navigation lights and dayshapes rigged for entire voyage.

Appendix A: Dead Ship Tow Plan Template

Section 2: Towing Vessel(s):

1. Number and type (conventional or tractor) of tugs and horsepower/bollard pull to maintain control of the dead ship at all times, including assist tugs.
 - a. Name.
 - b. Official number or documentation number.
 - c. Vessel owner/operator.
 - d. Vessel class/type/designation.
 - e. Call sign.
 - f. Flag.
 - g. Length, breadth, depth.
 - h. Navigational draft.
 - i. Air draft.
 - j. Displacement.
 - k. Where assist tugs will provide assistance if not making entire transit.
2. Towing configuration (stern, push, side)(surge chain, long chain):
 - a. Ground tackle details:
 - i. Diameter of tow wire.
 - ii. Length of tow wire.
 - iii. Emergency wires rigged (location, type).
 - iv. Moving condition (single/double drum).
 - b. Length and position of tows.
 - c. Points of attachment.

Section 3: Voyage Information:

1. Place of departure and destination.
2. Primary and alternate time and date of expected departure and arrival.
3. Intended trackline.
 - a. Review navigational clearances along the proposed route to accommodate vessel specifications.
 - i. Channel width.
 - ii. Navigation draft.
 - iii. Air draft.
 - iv. Lock/canal.
 - v. Structure gates.
 - vi. Critical infrastructure.
 - b. Marine construction projects along the proposed route that might reduce clearances.
 - c. COTP zones passed through.

Section 4: Designated emergency grounding areas.

Section 5: Purpose of dead ship movement.

Section 6: Date of last drydock or underwater inspection.

Appendix A: Dead Ship Tow Plan Template

Section 7: Maximum weather parameters (i.e., DSM will not commence if any of the parameters are exceeded, or are forecasted to be exceeded during the planned movement):

1. Winds.
2. Currents.
3. Visibility.
4. Tides.
5. Inclement weather plan.

Section 8: Communications plan Based on the route and complexity of the movement, agree on a communications plan to notify the COTP of departure and arrival. If the movement occurs along multiple COTP zones, the plan should include a communications schedule and handoff between Sector Command Center/VTS zones.

Section 9: A timeline of events of the overall operation.

Section 10: Identification of aids-to-navigation that might need to be temporarily moved for the dead ship movement.