

Safety Bulletin 04 of 2019

Use of dangerous heaving lines and pilot transfer safety arrangements

This Safety Bulletin is issued following the British Ports Association (BPA) Circular 232/19 dated 19 July 2019 following the DfT's Maritime Safety Week where the BPA as well as The British Ports Association, British Tugowners Association, Port Skills and Safety, UK Chamber of Shipping, UK Major Ports Group, and UK Maritime Pilots Association issued a joint notice to **raise awareness of the illegal use of dangerous heaving lines** as it is an important issue spanning both the shipping and ports sector.

Separately the BPA also wrote a joint opinion piece with the UK Maritime Pilots Association Chairman Mike Morris to call on the global shipping industry to raise the bar on **pilot transfer safety arrangements for ships arriving and leaving ports**.

Use of dangerously weighted heaving lines (DWHLs)

The use of DWHLs is a significant concern to the maritime community. The use of DWHLs when thrown by ship's crew passing mooring ropes or retrieving a messenger line is dangerous and has caused serious injury. DWHLs are a significant safety hazard and have the potential to cause serious or fatal injury and cannot be an accepted activity in UK ports and harbours. Indeed, instances could lead to a fine or criminal prosecution of a ship's master.

International and domestic codes are clear and unambiguous on the construction and weight of heaving lines.

The [Code of Safe Working Practice \(CoSWP\) 2018 Amendment](#), Section 26.3.5 states:

"To prevent personal injury to those receiving heaving lines, the 'monkey's fist' should be made with rope only and must not contain added weighting material. Safe alternatives include a small high-visibility soft pouch, filled with fast-draining pea shingle or similar, with a weight of not more than 0.5 kg. Under no circumstances is a line to be weighted by items such as shackles, bolts or nuts, or twist locks."

The [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) Code of Practice – Safety and Health in Ports](#), Section 6.13, Mooring Operations, Para 357 states:

"A 'monkey's fist' at the end of a heaving line should only be made of rope. Additional weights should never be added to it."

The signatories call for ship-owners, ship-managers, ship's agents, port operators and pilots to assist in eradicating the use of DWHLs by the following:

- 1) Informing all incoming vessels of their duty to follow the Code of Safe Working Practices (COSWP)
- 2) Issuing them with MCA Safety Bulletin No. 2 – Annex A
- 3) Stressing that fines, Port State Control Inspections and criminal prosecution are likely, especially should a vessel persist in their use.

All stakeholders can play an important role in preventing the use of anything other than a rope monkey's fist or alternative soft safety pouch. By promoting and raising the issue with all parties with a vested interest bad practice can be eliminated.

To report incidents involving DWHLs to the Ports of Jersey for enforcement action for both Jersey flagged, and non-Jersey flagged vessels, please contact St Helier VTS on VHF Channel 14 or at stheliervts@ports.je.

Pilot transfer safety arrangements

The UK Maritime Pilots Association (UKMPA) and the British Ports Association (BPA) are calling on the global shipping industry to raise the bar on pilot transfer safety arrangements for ships arriving and leaving ports in their opinion piece written in the shipping publication Lloyd's List, highlighting the ongoing occurrences of unsafe and defective pilot ladders for embarkation and disembarkation.

The article has been printed in Lloyd's List and can be found at: <https://www.britishports.org.uk/news/opinion-article-lets-keep-our-marine-pilots-safe>

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Annex A:

MCA Published Safety Bulletin No. 2 Dangerously Weighted Ships Heaving Lines – Accessible [Here](#).

MSF 5029 Rev 10/14



SAFETY BULLETIN

No. 2

DANGEROUSLY WEIGHTED SHIPS HEAVING LINES

There have been several instances where dangerously weighted heaving lines, including the use of monkey's fists with additional weights inserted into them, have been used resulting in serious injury. Further guidance is contained in Ch 26 section 26.3.5 in the 2015 edition of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers.



Vessels using dangerously weighted heaving lines in the UK may be subject to prosecution

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