

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL



Salcombe Harbour Authority

Towage Policy

Version 1.0 February 2026

1. Purpose & Scope

This guideline formalises towage procedures in line with the Ports & Marine Facilities Safety Code. It applies to routine towage, small workboat towage, non-routine operations, and emergency towage. It excludes commercial coded tugs.

2. Risk Assessment & Planning

2.1 Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA)

A DRA must be completed before every tow, reviewing weather, load, hazards, and abort criteria.

2.2 Written Risk Assessment

SHA Towing Risk Assessment required for large, unusual, or complex movements. Must be reviewed with the Harbour Master with a pre-tow briefing.

2.3 Towage Plan

Must follow SHA risk assessment and method statements, including route, comms, roles, and emergency breakaway procedures.

3. Environmental Operating Limits

- Max steady wind: 20 kt.
- Min visibility: 0.5 NM.
- Assess set/drift and avoid marginal conditions.

4. Towage Operations

4.1 Speed & Handling

Keep speeds low; max 5 knots when made fast. Avoid sudden power changes.

4.2 Connections & Equipment

Use suitable towlines with chafe protection. Tow only from strong points. Knife/quick release must be available.

4.3 Communications

Monitor VHF Ch 14. Agree hand signals, working channel, and abort words.

4.4 Exclusion Zones

Avoid moorings, swimmers, sailing craft, display lights and shapes.

5. Non-Routine & Large Movements

Requires Harbour Master consultation. Special Directions may apply. Escort/safety boat may be required.

6. Emergency Towage

Permitted only after DRA. Emergency services notified as required.

7. Abort Criteria

Loss of control, line damage, crew uncertainty, or conditions exceeding limits.

8. Reporting

All towage logged; incidents and near-misses reported for MSMS learning.