



भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING, MUMBAI

Merchant Shipping Notice No. 11 of 2025

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Date: 10.10.2025

Subject: Deployment of Tugs having Sea-going capabilities for Emergency Response at Indian Ports

1. Introduction:

1.1 India's expanding maritime trade has brought about increased vessel traffic, higher cargo volumes, and elevated navigational risks along its extensive coastline. Despite this growth, the availability of maritime salvage and emergency towing capabilities in Ports around the Indian coast remains limited. Currently, the Directorate General of Shipping in agreement with Mumbai Port Authority and Chennai Port Authority has positioned two Sea- going Emergency Towing Vessels (ETVs) one each based at Mumbai and Chennai.

1.2 Normally such ETVs are deployed as Harbour Tugs throughout the year and performs the day-to-day functions of berthing/unberthing etc. In emergency situations, the Directorate orders deployment of ETVs to the incident site which perform the duties as per the instructions of the On-Scene Commander, Indian Coast Guard. While these vessels serve as critical national resources, their geographic limitations frequently result in delayed responses, particularly in regions beyond their immediate operational range.

2. Challenges faced:

2.1 India has witnessed serious maritime incidents along its coastline that exposed vulnerabilities in the current emergency response framework. Several incidents of Fire, Machinery failure, Grounding, etc., occurred around the Indian Coast, year after year, especially during the monsoon months. Such incidents necessitate quick deployment of ETVs for emergency response and towing the vessel away from the coast to prevent a disaster and to protect the marine environment. The sinking of container ship *MSC ELSA 3* in May 2025 and major fire and explosion of container ship *WAN HAI 503* in June 2025, off the coast of Kerala, led to falling of several containers in waters and the release of hazardous cargo and significant environmental risk.

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3. Urgent need:

3.1 Section 226 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2025 states as follows:

Primary Response Party 226. (1) The ship owner or master, seafarers of the concerned vessel and such other persons as may be notified by the Central Government shall be the primary response party responsible for engaging in maritime emergency response.

(2) The primary response party shall comply with all directions, advisories or instructions issued by the concerned nodal authority for the respective class of marine incidents.

3.2 Though the ship owner or the master or seafarers of the concerned vessel remain a primary response party for marine incident response, in many cases the Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy had to perform the role of first responders to protect the Indian coast and to prevent any damage to the marine environment. The recent incidents demonstrated the need for the urgent deployment of Tugs for towing and other functions such as Fire-Fighting (Fi-Fi), supply of resources, etc. to the accident site, to provide timely assistance to the Indian Coast Guard and Navy, who serve as the first responders.

3.3 At the time of emergencies, the consequences of delayed response due to the non-availability of suitable tugs for emergency towing and Fi-Fi may led to catastrophe. Lessons learnt from such accidents highlight the urgent need for Indian ports to maintain Tugs with sea-going and fire-fighting capabilities for emergency response that can be deployed swiftly to the site of the incident to complement the efforts of national ETVs or the Indian Coast Guard. Such tugs can function as an immediate first line of response until professional salvors and specialized resources are fully mobilized.

4. Measures for compliance:

4.1 In view of the challenges and urgent need enumerated above and to meet the requirements of Central/State/District/Port Disaster Management, the Directorate General of Shipping in accordance with the provisions of Part-X (Marine Incident and Emergency Response) of the Merchant Shipping Act 2025 hereby mandates that **all Indian ports—whether Major or Non-major, Public or Private—handling 10 million metric tonnes (MMT) or more of cargo annually and/or maintaining a fleet of three or more tugs of bollard pull higher than 45MT for port operations shall designate at least one sea-going tug for emergency response. Such a sea-going tug should be certified for at least Indian coastal operation and capable of emergency towing and fire-fighting.** It is essential that harbour tugs, which lack the capabilities or specifications similar to the ETV, are expressly prohibited from being tasked with duties expected of an Emergency Towing Vessel.

4.2 Though these tugs are primarily hired for port operations and perform the duties in the port throughout the year, the ports shall assign at-least one (01) tug having the required capabilities and specifications, which shall remain in a state of constant operational readiness to respond immediately to maritime emergencies such as towing of disabled vessels, fire-fighting and other contingencies. The specifications of ETV already engaged by the DGS is enclosed as Annexure for ready reference. These specifications are recommendatory in nature. The designated tug must have sea-going capabilities and appropriately equipped for emergency duties including fire-fighting, towing, and pollution response. The arrangement is intended to provide an immediate response for a period of 3–5 days, until owners/salvors mobilize a suitable tug/asset for their operations.

4.3 The designated tug shall be manned by duly certified personnel in accordance with the prescribed Indian coastal manning scale. In cases where coastal manning scale is not maintained



during routine harbour operations, the port authority shall ensure that appropriate crew augmentation arrangements are identified in advance with the tug operators/manning agents and can be activated to achieve the required manning scale within twelve hours of the emergency notification issued by the Directorate General of Shipping. In emergency situations, the DGS may facilitate necessary dispensation for manning, accommodation etc., for the designated tugs to commence the operation swiftly. Further, the port authority and tug operators shall ensure that crew engaged on such tugs are provided with practical training in handling adverse weather conditions and undertaking emergency response operations. If required, the port authorities may assign experienced port pilots for augmenting the manning of tugs.

4.4 All the Indian ports that fall within the applicability criteria of this directive are required to ensure deployment of at-least one sea-going tug in a port within 90 days from the date of issuance of this notice. A formal compliance report shall be submitted to the Directorate, providing details of the designated tug, its technical specifications, crew qualifications, and plan for emergency readiness. In addition, each port shall submit an Emergency Tug Deployment Plan (ETDP) outlining operational responsibilities, communication protocols, and standard operating procedures for various emergency scenarios. This plan should be included in the Port Disaster Management Plan.

4.5 It may be noted that the deployment of the tugs stipulated in this MS Notice are not intended to perform salvage functions or to replicate ocean-going salvage capacity, but to deliver first response and stabilization until specialized assets are in place. However, the availability of such tugs is vital to provide immediate support to the Indian Coast Guard and Navy.

5. Cost, Insurance and Financial Guidelines

5.1 The cost of deploying such tugs for emergency duties shall be borne by the owners or insurers of the disabled vessel, where the requirement for assistance is determined by the Indian Maritime Administration or any other authority entrusted with such responsibility, for the duration of their engagement. The port may stipulate the reasonable tariff for utilization of resources on emergency situations. Any dispute regarding the tariff may be brought to the notice of the Directorate General of Shipping for necessary direction.

5.2 Tugs engaged for emergency response shall at all times maintain valid insurance coverage appropriate to the activities to be undertaken, as prescribed. The responsibility for ensuring such insurance conditions, as well as initiating reevaluation of existing tender conditions or the process of retendering for such tugs where required, shall rest with the Port Authority. In case, the existing tender conditions does not permit designation of any sea-going tug which is available in the port for emergency response operation, then the Port Authority shall ensure renewal of the contract with at least one tug meeting the prescribed conditions within a maximum period of nine (09) months, or earlier in the event of renewal of tender, whichever occurs first.

5.3 In the event a tug is directed to act as an ETV, the Charter Hire payable shall include compensation for all additional costs arising from such deployment, including modifications to the tug, additional equipment and crew, and enhanced insurance requirements, and the Tug owners shall ensure that comprehensive P&I Cover and other appropriate insurance protections are obtained against any claims, losses, or damages arising from the performance of ETV duties. Further, the tug shall not be deemed off-hired during the period of such deployment, including the reasonable time required for repairs necessitated by damages sustained while performing ETV services.



6. Verification and Monitoring:

6.1 The Directorate shall monitor the Ports for compliance with the stipulated requirements during the annual ISPS audits and NSPC inspections. All the Ports are advised to treat this mandate as an essential safety obligation as part of disaster management, and not as a procedural formality. The safety of shipping, seafarers, cargo, and coastal communities depends on the timely availability of capable response assets around the Indian Coast.

6.2 This initiative forms part of India's broader strategy to modernize its maritime safety infrastructure and aligns with international best practices. The decentralization of emergency response resources and their integration at the port level will significantly enhance India's resilience to maritime incidents and support safer, more sustainable port operations nationwide.



Capt. Harinder Singh,
Nautical Surveyor and DDG(Tech)

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FOR GUIDANCE ONLY**Recommended technical specification for Ocean Going Tugs to perform the function of Emergency Towing (ETV)**

	Criteria	Recommended Specification for Ocean Going Tugs
a.	Age	Age of the vessel should not be more than the norms prescribed by the Govt.
b.	Bollard Pull	45 T or more
c.	Method of Propulsion	Method of Propulsion: Azimuth stern Drive (ASD) or Tractor/Reverse tractor of cycloidal or steerable rudder propulsion system or VOITH.
d.	Crane	Around 0.8-1.0 T SWL
e.	Towing	Towing gear arrangement with accessories. Length of towing wire should be at least 600 mtrs and Breaking strength should be proportionate (at least 3 times) to the bollard pull (45T) (MSC 884 'General formulation for the towline', Clause 12.9)
f.	Hawsers	Hawsers of adequate size i.e. not less 56 mm diameter and the length to not be less than 180 mtrs. (Or) 2 hawsers of 110 mtrs length with connection
g.	Space	The area of the deck working space shall be not less than 70 sq.mtr.
h.	Fire-Fighting Class	1 not less than 2400 m3/hr.
i.	Length O.A.	Maximum 35 Meters
J	Breadth & depth	(i) Breadth range - 8 to 16 Meter. (ii) Moulded depth - maximum limit or range 5 to 6 mtrs
k.	Draft	Operation Draft not more than 5.5 meters
l.	Life Saving Equipments	Lifesaving equipment/survival kit and first aid material with Neil Robertson stretcher as per statutory requirement for her size and operation.
m.	Class	IACS member
n.	Endurance	Vessel should have endurance for at least 10 days RTB (Return to Base) for replenishment of fresh water, provision, manning, etc.
o.	Speed	10-12 kts

Remarks:

1. The above-mentioned specifications are recommendatory in nature at present, and should serve as a minimum criterion for engagement of tugs by the respective ports during the renewal of contracts for port operations.
2. For emergency operations beyond the sheltered harbor limits the tug should be manned as per the Indian Coastal manning scale applicable for the said tug relevant to GT & Power.
