Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai
Nautical Wing

Draft Merchant Shipping Notice No of 2025

File Ref. No: 25-63011/47/2025-NT-DGS(comp. no.34996) **Date: 26.06.2025**

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.

3. Urgent need:

3.1 These incidents demonstrated the need for the urgent deployment of Tugs for towing and other functions such as Fire Fighting, supply of resources etc to the accident site to provide timely assistance to the Indian Coast guard and Navy being the first responders. 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 firefighting capabilities for emergency response that can be deployed swiftly to the site of the incident to complement the efforts of national ETVs or Indian Coast Guard efforts. 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 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 two or more tugs for port operations shall designate at least one 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.** Though the tug is primarily hired for port operations and perform the duties in the port throughout the year, it shall remain in a state of constant operational readiness to respond immediately to maritime emergencies such as towing of disabled vessels, fire-fighting, oil spill response and other contingencies. The specifications of ETV already engaged by the DGS is enclosed for ready reference.

4.2 The designated tug must have sea-going capabilities and appropriately equipped for emergency duties including firefighting, towing, and pollution response. 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 six hours of the emergency notification issued by the Directorate General of Shipping.

4.3 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 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.

4.4 It may be noted that the tugs stipulated in this MS Notice are not intended to perform salvage functions in a challenging environment. However, the availability of such tugs is vital to provide immediate support to the Indian Coast Guard and Navy being the first responders. The cost of deployment of such tugs on emergency duties shall be borne by the owners/insurers of the vessels in emergency situations for the period of engagement. The port may stipulate the 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.

5. Verification and Monitoring:

5.1 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.

5.2 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-cum-DDG(Tech)

Note:

1. Comments to be submitted latest by 15th July 2025

2. For further clarification or support regarding this directive, port authorities may contact the following officials of the Directorate General of Shipping.

i) Capt. Harinder Singh, Nautical Surveyor and DDG(Tech) – singh.harinder@gov.in
ii) Adv. Manneck Vesuna, Legal Assistant – nautic.lglassit1-dgs@gov.in
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Annexure

FOR GUIDANCE ONLY

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

	Criteria	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	60 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	Not less than 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 (60T) (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.
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