

SB3-24

Lyn Kindlen-Funnell, Harbour Master

Published: 18/06/2024

Expires: 18/06/2025



Dangerously Weighted Heaving Lines

SAFETY BULLETIN

Dangerously Weighted Heaving Lines

Masters and crews of vessels visiting the Thames are required to use properly constructed heaving lines for all mooring and towing operations. **The use of 'weighted' heaving lines is both prohibited and extremely dangerous.** These may cause serious injury or a fatality to those on the receiving end, either ashore or onboard a tug or mooring boat.

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 near misses.



The MCA has issued a policy on reporting and management of inappropriately weighted heaving lines. The Port of London Authority reports all instances of dangerously weighted heaving lines to the MCA. This may result in enforcement action being taken against the vessel.

“To prevent injury to seafarers 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.”

Guidance can also be found in the [*Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen](#), Chapter 26.3.6

Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in the VTS Centre



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Masters of vessels and Agents are reminded that heaving lines with inappropriate weighting, such as pieces of metal, are **not to be used under any circumstances**. This dangerous practice is causing unacceptable risk to tug crews and shore mooring teams and appropriate enforcement action will be taken as necessary.

Shore mooring teams and tug crews have instructions to cut off weighted “monkeys’ fists” or any other added weights from heaving lines, where used. The weighted “fist” or added weight will be retained as evidence in the event of proceedings being taken against the vessel and/or individuals involved.

*Denotes a hyperlink to a destination other than PLA owned/operated websites. Be aware that those websites may have different security and privacy policies to that of the PLA, for which the PLA takes no responsibility.

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