



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

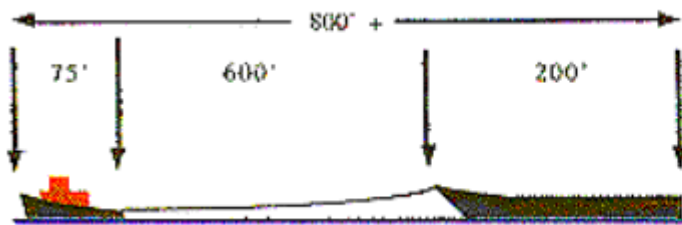
Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Safety Alert 06-96

TUG AND BARGE ADVISORY

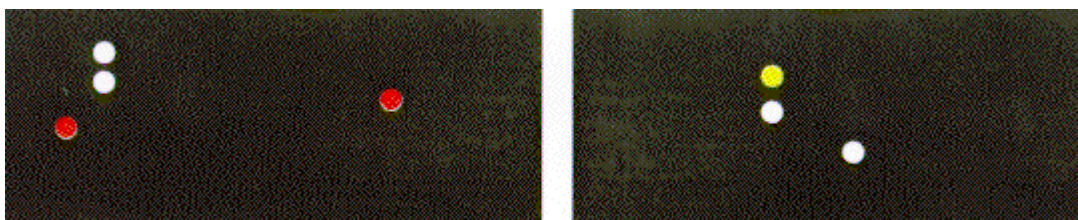
During the summer of 1995 a recreational boater narrowly escaped serious injury following the collision of his vessel with a tug and barge departing Portland, Maine. In that accident, the tug was towing a barge astern on a single tow wire at night. As the tug and barge headed for sea, the tug was setting the barge out on a long tow wire, a practice which is normal and necessary for the safety of the tug boat's crew. The recreational boat saw the tug, but did not realize it was towing a barge. The recreational boat waited for the tug to pass, and then, at a slow speed, tried to pass immediately behind the tug. It then struck the towing cable, was immediately pulled down by the stern, and was swamped. Accidents of this type are often fatal; in this case, only the slow speed of the recreational vessel and a quick rescue prevented the incident from becoming a catastrophe.



Tug and Barge systems can easily exceed 800' in length, even in restricted harbor waters.

Tugs and barges comprise a vital component of this nation's transportation system, and each year deliver hundreds of thousands of barrels of petroleum and other vital products to Portland and other New England ports. While their passage through New England waters may seem routine to many, these vessels are actually quite difficult to maneuver in ports and other coastal waters, especially when the tug boat is setting a barge out on a low wire or making up for transit into port.

Recreational boaters can do their part in port and harbor safety by recognizing the location of shipping channels and remaining well clear of large commercial traffic, especially tug and barge systems. All mariners should be well aware of the location of shipping channels, anchorages, commercial piers, draw bridges and other congested port areas. Please recognize that tugs and barges and other large commercial vessels need plenty of room to maneuver and prepare for sea and/or berthing. Also, these large vessels can require considerable water to navigate without going aground. It is easy to underestimate how many areas in a harbor these large vessels can't go.



Do you know what these lights mean? Do you know where the tug and barge are?

The system works better if we all know what we're talking about.

Be safe, take a safe boating course. Call 1-800-336-BOAT for more information.

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