

# Marine Safety Flash

## A15-12 (15<sup>th</sup> July)



### Broken Tow Line

#### Incident Overview

At 2310LT two harbour tugs attended an inbound Singapore Registered 28,500 GT cargo ship.

Under pilot's orders, the forward tug was requested to connect its tow line. The tug passed up the messenger line (28mm eight-strand polypropylene line) which was connected to the Grommet (12 strand 48mm plasma) which is then attached to a Mother line (12 strand 96mm aquaflex). The Seaman on the foredeck saw the messenger and grommet pass through the panama lead, about eight metres above the Seaman, and then received confirmation from the ship's crew that the line was all fast; this information was relayed to the Master – all fast. The Master informed the Pilot that the forward tug was all fast.

On passing the breakwater the ship's speed was about 4.5 knots, the Pilot requested the tug to "lay back" alongside at one-quarter power, this request was acknowledged by the Master. On adjusting the azimuth pods to about five degrees aft thrust, progressing towards the requested one-quarter power, the line to the ship then fell into the water from the bow whilst still making forward head way.



The Master informed the Pilot immediately of the issue; the recovery of the Grommet and Mother line from the water was hampered by the line being fouled between the block fenders. The crew deployed the emergency tow line and the ship's berthing continued without further incident.

#### Key Findings

On recovery of the line, it was found that the Messenger had parted. It is assumed that the Messenger was belayed in some fashion to the ship's bitts. Due to the height difference between the tug and the ship there was no way, as is normally the case, to visually observe the Grommet placed on the ship's bitts once passed through the panama lead.

#### Recommendations

Where possible, visually observe the Grommet being placed on the ship's bitts. This is the first instance known in this company of the Messenger being attached to the ship's bitts. The Harbour Master informed the ship of the instance and requested that the crew be aware of the correct tug connection procedures.