# Contractor rope handling injury – BMAPA Alert

## WHAT HAPPENED

Following discharge of a waterborne barge delivery to a readymix plant on the Thames river, an experienced and trained (contractor) crew member sustained an injury to his left index and middle fingers while preparing for its departure. Whilst releasing the towline, the ends of two fingers became trapped between the Dyneema tow rope and the towing bitts (bollard) of the tug. The injury required hospital treatment and a minor operation to remove a damaged fingernail.

The crew member was wearing loose fitting gloves, which caught in the towline causing his fingers to be drawn into the rope turns as they tightened around the towing bitts. The rope had to be cut to free the crew member's fingers.

**Key findings**

• The tug Master informed the deck crew that he was going to move the tug / barge tow; however, he did not receive confirmation from the deck crew that everyone was safely positioned. The tug Master did not have visibility of the deck crew at this point in time

• The gloves worn by the crew member were not his employer's standard issue and may have been unsuitable for the task.

• The contracting company reported the incident to their industry regulator; however, they failed to report the matter to the company. It was eventually reported by a competitor contractor

• The barge operator was accredited by the Port of London to operate on the River Thames.

## LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

**How could this have been avoided?**

• Two-way communications and positive reporting procedures should have been established where there was no line of sight visibility.

• The crew member's hand should have been kept clear of danger

• The gloves worn should have been suitable for this specialist task.

**Recommendations / Action taken**

• Ensure all personnel are fully briefed in the operation.

• Ensure two-way communications and / or line of sight visibility.

• Review operational practice to keep hands clear of entrapment; hands should never be placed on or near surging rope turns.

• Ensure contractor on-boarding process is adequately robust.

• Ensure PPE is risk assessed suitable for specialist tasks; although gloves are advised for mooring operations they must be suitable, standard issue general-purpose items may not be appropriate.

• Ensure contractors are familiar with company reporting protocols.

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| **LOCATION:** | **WHARF** | **ALERT STATUS:** | **Normal** |
| **ACTIVITY:** | **TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS / DELIVERY** | **DATE ISSUED:** | **03/12/2020 14:08:22** |
| **SUB ACTIVITY:** | **LOADING** | **INCIDENT No:** | **03578** |