



Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP): Self-Mooring Operations

Notice to all shipowners, ship operators and managers, masters and seafarers

This notice should be read in conjunction with (COSWP) Chapter 26.

Summary

The Code of Safety Working Practice for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) is reviewed and updated annually by industry representatives, seafarer unions and seafarers. During the 2020 Amendment 5 revision a proposal for Chapter 26 was agreed by the British Tugowners Association (BTA), Port Skills Safety (PSS) and the UK Chamber of Shipping (CoS). This will be incorporated into the next COSWP Amendment.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 COSWP ('the Code') is published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and endorsed by the National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee, UK Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus International and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) as best practice guidance for improving health and safety on board ship. It is intended primarily for merchant seafarers on UK-registered ships
- 1.2 The Code is reviewed annually and following the Stakeholder Engagement Exercise held in July 2020, Chapter 26 (section 26.6: Safe mooring of domestic passenger craft and ships' launches to quays) was noted for updating in response to industry and the MAIB incident reports into the dredger [Cherry Sand](#);

'A recommendation has been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (2020/118) to amend the Code of Safe Working Practices for Seafarers to provide guidance on mooring and unmooring operations, and when it is permissible for vessels to self-moor.'

and the tug [Millgarth](#);

1.11 Regulations and Guidance

1.11.1 Mooring Operations

'There is little reference to smaller vessels and the additional dangers associated with self-mooring which again highlighted a guidance review.'

- 1.3 The following guidance will be added to the next COSWP Amendment, as a new Section 26.7 and new Annex 26.3 Examples of mooring arrangements.



2. Chapter 26.7 - Safe self-mooring operations

- 26.7.1 Where reasonably practicable, appropriately trained shore-side personnel should be available to assist with mooring operations.
- 26.7.2 However, it is recognised that the act of mooring or unmooring a vessel with the exclusive use of the vessel's crew (self-mooring) – a common occurrence in the small vessel sector – may be a reasonably practicable operation provided that the unique hazards have been mitigated.
- 26.7.3 A safe system of work for the activity, incorporating a risk assessment and method statement, should be provided. Such documents should consider that access to some quays, jetties, berths and terminals may give rise to additional risk; for example, working at height, water safety, restricted working areas, unguarded edges and vertical ladders. Additionally, consideration shall be given to the size and type of vessel in relation to the berth and/or mooring buoy, the potential dangers posed to personnel from the prevailing environmental conditions, communication between those involved and appropriate supervision by a competent person.
- 26.7.4 As many berths may not have been designed for the conduct of self-mooring, risk assessments should be carried out in collaboration with the berth operator/owner to address such shared risks.
- 26.7.5 Seafarers and other workers engaged in the operation have a responsibility for the health and safety of themselves, or any other person onboard the vessel who may be affected by the conduct of the operation. The Master or Coxswain of a vessel remains responsible for the safety of their crew during self-mooring operations and implementation of the control measures in the company risk assessment, including all foreseeable hazards such as unintentional entry into the water and if the craft is moving in a way posing a risk of crushing or other injuries.
- 26.7.6 Consideration should be given to posting a member of the crew, with good communication with the helmsman, to monitor that those leaving and returning to the vessel do so safely.
- 26.7.7 Providing safe access to a vessel, in accordance with Chapter 22 (section 22.11 for small craft), during the operation is an integral part of ensuring a safe working environment on board. Safe access shall always be ensured, irrespective of the form of mooring operation conducted. Where the vessel side is guarded, personnel should not climb over bulwarks or transit along a rubbing band. Further guidance can be found in Chapter 11 on safe movement on board ship (especially section 11.5 on lighting), Chapter 22 on boarding arrangements, MGN 533(M) Amendment 1, MGN 591(M+F) and Port Skills and Safety SIP014 Guidance on safe access and egress, SIP021 Guidance on safe access to fishing vessels and small craft in ports and SIP 005 Guidance on mooring operations.
- 26.7.8 A vessel should be securely moored considering the guidance provided in this chapter. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that the mooring arrangement is effective in restricting movement of the vessel for the foreseeable weather and tidal conditions.

Recommended hierarchy of means of self-mooring

- 26.7.9 Notwithstanding the points above, and ensuring that the vessel is tight alongside, the following self-mooring operations may be permissible, in order of hierarchy:
- (a) A means of self-mooring that can be conducted safely within the confines of the vessel using pre-rigged lines or lassoing bollards from the vessel. The vessel should be fully secured before opening the bulwark gate and/or transiting to the quay/berth.



- (b) A safe and effective means of partially self-mooring within the confines of the vessel using not less than two lines before opening the bulwark gate and/or transiting to or from the quay/berth to complete the operation. In such circumstances, additional control measures may be necessary to address hazards regarding unrestrained movement of the vessel.
- (c) Only if it is not possible to achieve full or partial mooring of the vessel prior to embarkation or disembarkation, in the manner detailed above, should crew transit to or from the quay or berth while the vessel is unsecured. The risk assessment should account for the manoeuvrability of the vessel, its handling characteristics, the stability of the platform, the vessel's ability to hold position alongside in the prevailing circumstances and the conditions for the transit of personnel to conduct the mooring operation.

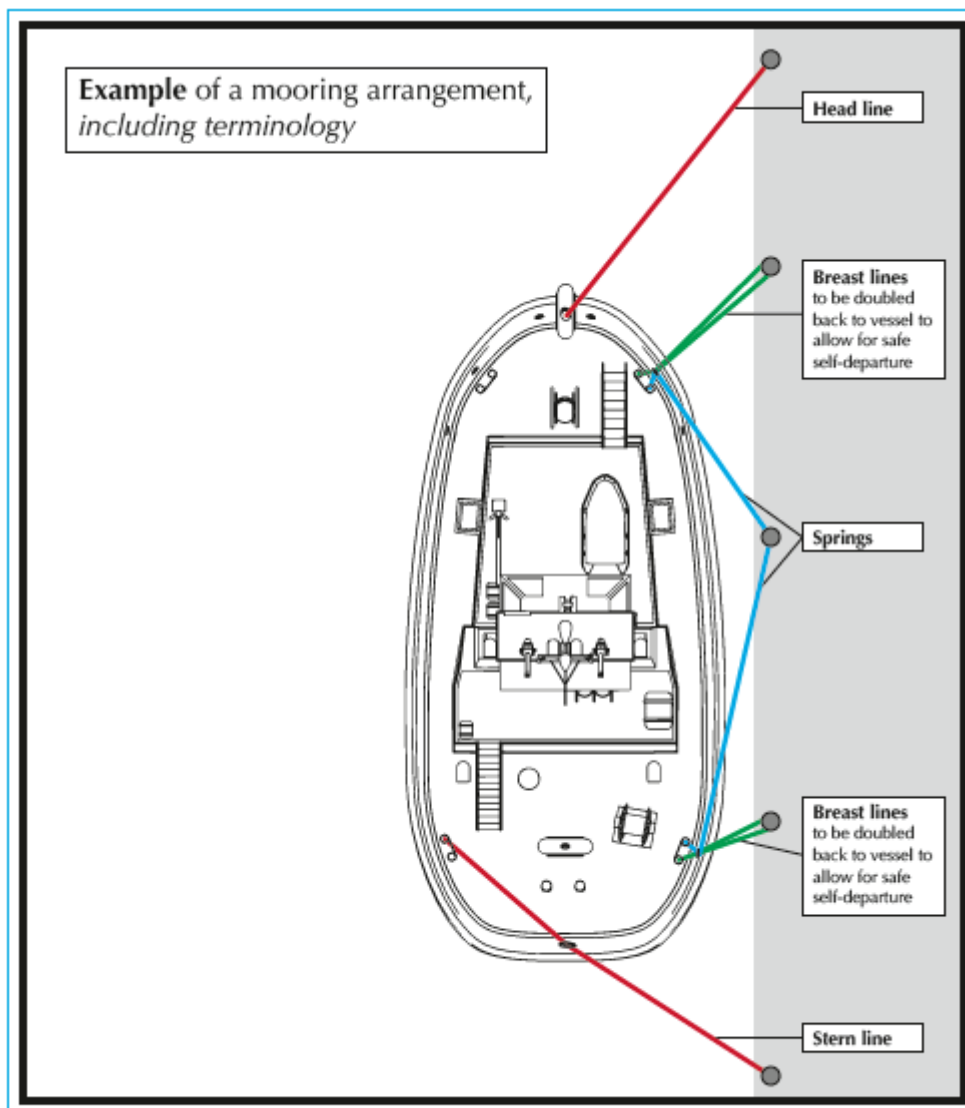
26.7.10 Annex 26.3 includes examples of mooring arrangements, showing the use of fore and aft lines doubled back onto the vessel to allow for safe departure without leaving the vessel.

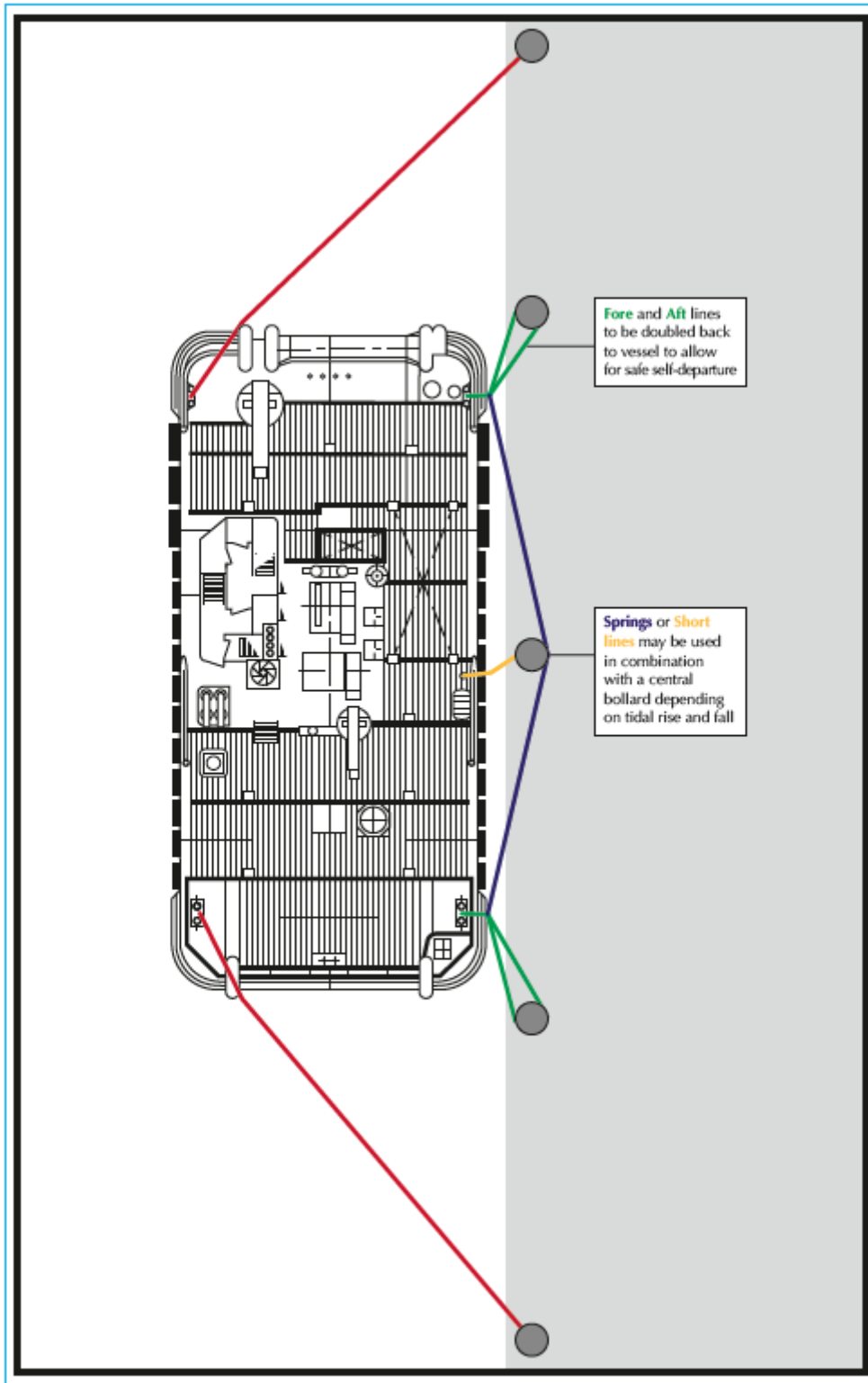
26.7.11 The use of linesmen shall be considered as a reasonably practicable measure in all circumstances where additional hazards have been identified or existing control measures have been assessed as impractical or ineffective given a change of condition or defect.

26.7.12 Passengers and supernumerary personnel must be kept clear of all mooring and unmooring operations and all personnel should keep clear of snap-back zones.



Annex 26.3 Examples of mooring arrangements





More Information

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