

SERIOUS MARINE CASUALTY

JANUARY 2026

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

“The sole objective of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

As the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the accident date, this interim report is published, pursuant to Regulation 14(2)(b) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012.

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

© Crown copyright, 2026

See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> for details.

All reports can be found on our website:

www.gov.uk/maib

For all enquiries:

Email: iso@maib.gov.uk

Tel: +44 (0)23 8039 5500

Interim report on the investigation of the failure of a towline and injury to the crew on board the tug *Svitzer Avon* in the approach to Royal Portbury Lock, Bristol, England on 4 February 2025

The information contained in this interim report is based on the various aspects of the investigation completed to date. Readers are cautioned that there is the possibility new evidence may become available that might alter the circumstances as depicted in this report.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

On 4 February 2025, the UK registered harbour tug *Svitzer Avon* was assisting the Portugal registered vehicle carrier *Auto Eco* during its approach to Royal Portbury Lock, Bristol, England when the tug's towline parted under load. The recoiling rope shattered the wheelhouse's forward centreline window, causing minor injuries to the master and mate.

INVESTIGATION

The MAIB's investigation has considered all aspects of the accident to determine the causes and circumstances leading to the failure of the towline, including analysis of the tug's winch and towline system; rope management; the wheelhouse windows; and training and supervision.

ONGOING ACTION

The MAIB investigation is complete, and a draft of the report is being prepared and will be distributed to stakeholders for a 30-day consultation period in due course.

Image courtesy of Emerson2014 (ShipSpotting.com)



Svitzer Avon

VESSEL PARTICULARS

Vessel's name	Svitzer Avon
Flag	UK
Classification society	American Bureau of Shipping
IMO number	9788162
Type	Tug
Registered owner	Svitzer EuroMed B.V.
Manager(s)	Svitzer Marine Limited
Construction	Steel
Year of build	2017
Length overall	28.2m
Gross tonnage	461
Minimum safe manning	3
Bollard pull	70 tonnes

VOYAGE PARTICULARS

Port of departure	Royal Portbury Dock, Bristol, England
Port of arrival	Royal Portbury Dock, Bristol, England
Type of voyage	Internal waters
Cargo information	Not applicable
Manning	5

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION

Date and time	4 February 2025 at 2011
Type of marine casualty or incident	Serious Marine Casualty
Location of incident	Royal Portbury Lock approach 51°30.2'N 002°439'W
Place on board	Foredeck/wheelhouse
Injuries/fatalities	Minor injuries to 2 crew
Damage/environmental impact	Towline failure; 2 wheelhouse windows shattered; superstructure damage
Vessel operation	Towing
Voyage segment	Arrival
External & internal environment	Cloudy, fair conditions; wind south-south-west force 4; slight to moderate sea, 0.5m swell; east-north-east flood tide 3.5kts.
Persons on board	5