

Tugs with Tows <1600 Gross Tons: Guidelines for Navigating in Reduced Visibility

Critical Maneuvering Areas (CMAs): There are areas within the Bay where additional standards of care are required due to the restrictive nature of the channel, proximity of hazards, or the prevalence of adverse currents. Tugs with tows should not transit through CMAs when visibility is less than 0.25 nautical mile. Tugs with tows in petroleum service should not transit through CMAs when visibility is less than 0.5 nautical mile.

Locations within the Bay identified as Critical Maneuvering Areas:

- Redwood Creek
- San Mateo-Hayward Bridge
- Oakland Bar Channel*
- Islais Creek Channel
- Richmond Inner Harbor
- Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, East Span
- Union Pacific Bridge
- New York Slough, up-bound
- Rio Vista Lift Bridge

*Note: the Oakland Bar Channel is identified due to cross currents and its proximity to the Bay Bridge and Yerba Buena Island.

Vessels docked: Tugs with tows at a dock within the Bay should not commence a movement if visibility is less than 0.25 nautical mile at the dock. Tugs with tows in petroleum service at a dock within the Bay should not commence a movement if visibility is less than 0.5 nautical miles at the dock.

Vessels proceeding to dock: Tugs with tows proceeding to a dock should anchor if visibility at the dock is known to be less than 0.25 nautical mile, unless, under all circumstances, proceeding to the dock is the safest option. Tugs with tows in petroleum service proceeding to a dock should anchor if visibility at the dock is known to be less than 0.5 nautical mile, unless, under all circumstances, proceeding to the dock is the safest option.

Note: Vessel captains or operators should notify VTS upon determination that a scheduled movement will be delayed or canceled. If underway, they shall make a sailing plan deviation report per VTS regulations.

Adopted February 2009. See Harbor Safety Plan Chapter II: General Weather, Currents and Tides for discussion.

Tugs with Tows <1600 Gross Tons: Guidelines for Navigating in Severe Weather

A number of factors must be considered when limiting transits in the Bay or closing the Bar due to severe weather, including sea state, tidal influences, visibility, traffic density, and wind advisories issued by NOAA. The size and condition of the vessels being addressed must also be considered. The Tug Escort Work Group recommends a tiered approach, applying greater caution as conditions worsen.

Sustained winds exceeding 25 knots in the Bay

- Tugs with tows should closely evaluate whether it is safe to transit in the Bay. Size and sail area of the vessel, tidal influences, visibility, operator skill and traffic density should all be considered.
- VTS San Francisco will establish regular communications with bridge watches of VTS users in Bay Area anchorages, and more closely monitor swing circles to ensure vessels are not dragging.

Sustained winds exceeding 40 knots in the Bay

- Transits to and from berths are not recommended, but may be performed following a careful risk management evaluation by the vessel operator and vessel management.

Sustained winds exceeding 40 knots and/or seas exceed 12 ft at the Sea Buoy

- Bar traffic restrictions and closure should be considered for tugs with tows. Size of the vessel, draft, swell period, tidal influences, visibility, and traffic density should all be considered. Strong ebb tides should be avoided, and a minimum of 10 feet underkeel clearance is recommended.

Adopted February 2009. See Harbor Safety Plan Chapter II: General Weather, Currents and Tides for discussion.