

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR TOWING ACTIVITIES

1.0 Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines aim at ensuring that towing activities are conducted in compliance with acceptable standards and a code of conduct so as to minimise the risks of accident.

2.0 Definition

- (a) **Towing** means a nautical activity **including** water skiing whereby a motorised pleasure craft tows an unpowered inflatable tube secured to the stern part of the craft with an approved rope (**specified at Para 7**) and carries a rider or riders.
- (b) **Water Skiing** means a nautical activity where a person standing on a floating board is towed by a pleasure craft by means of an approved rope.
- (c) **Skier** means a person being towed during water-ski.
- (d) **Rider** means a person being towed on an unpowered inflatable tube.
- (e) **Inflatable tube** means any device that can be inflated into a buoyant structure such as rings, sausages, or bananas or any other devices fitted with securing handles to enable a rider or riders to grip to them while being towed.
- (f) **Skipper**-means a person holder of a skipper's license issued under Section 84 of the Tourism Authority Act 2006.
- (g) **Observer**-means a person other than a skipper, who-
 - i. is on board a pleasure craft being used for towing; and
 - ii. keeps watch on riders being towed

3.0 Registration and licensing

- (a) The operator shall hold a valid Pleasure Craft Licence with "towing" specified thereon as activity.
- (b) The skipper shall hold a valid skipper's licence issued by the Tourism Authority.

4.0 General Rules

4.1 Disclaimer Form/liability waiver

Operators shall require riders of legal age or in case of a minor, a parent or legal guardian, to read and sign an assumption of risk and liability waiver form prior to engaging in the activity. A model of disclaimer is at **Annex A**.

4.2 Hours of business

The hours of operation for towing activities shall be between 07 00 hrs to 18 30 hrs.

4.3 Minimum age requirements

- (a) No person of less than 5 years shall be allowed to undertake any towing activity on an inflatable tube.
- (b) A person between 5 and 8 years shall be accompanied by an adult/monitor/instructor on the inflatable tube when undertaking the towing activity.
- (c) No person of less than 8 years shall be allowed to undertake water skiing.

4.4 Daily equipment inspections

Prior to starting the activity, it shall be the responsibility of the operator or person in charge of the craft or both, to carry out a daily inspection of all systems, towline, safety gear and related equipment to ensure that they are properly maintained and in safe operating condition.

4.5 Boat Traffic/Right of way

A pleasure craft engaged in towing activities shall not be considered as a *Vessel Restricted in its ability to manoeuvre* and shall be required to give way to other crafts as prescribed in the International Regulations for Prevention Of Collision At Sea.

Vessels approaching from behind shall keep a distance of at least 50 meters from the skier or rider.

4.6 Maximum number of passengers on “Inflatable Tube”

- a) During any towing activity, the maximum number of persons including those being towed and those onboard the pleasure craft shall not exceed the carrying capacity of the pleasure craft.
- b) The maximum number of persons to be towed shall not be more than 5 at any one time.
- c) No more than 2 inflatable tubes shall be towed at any one time.

4.7 Hand Signals

The code of hand signals at **Annex B** to be understood by both the skipper of the craft and the skier are intended to be made by the skier to communicate with the skipper.

4.8 Markings

A pleasure craft licensed for towing activities shall affix permanently and in a conspicuous manner, on each side of the pleasure craft except for the bow, and the transom, the following markings:

- a) the letters “PC” followed by the registration mark allotted to it.
- b) the maximum number of persons it is authorised to carry;
- c) the letter “T” to indicate the activity of towing;
- d) its embarkation point

4.9 Specifications for Markings

All Markings shall be as follows:

- a) *Characters (numbers and letters) shall be **plain vertical BLOCK characters** of height between 76mm (3 inches), excluding borders and must be of good proportion.*
- b) The thickness of every part of every letter or figure shall not be less than 10 millimetres;
- c) The total width of the space taken by every letter or figure, other than the “1”, shall not be less than 35 millimetres;
- d) The space between adjoining letters and figures shall not be less than 10 millimetres;
- e) *The space between group of letters and figures shall not be less than 35 millimetres.*
- f) *Characters of varying thickness, slanted characters, and scroll type characters are NOT acceptable.*
- g) *Numbers and letters must be of a single colour (black), not outlined, shadowed or rounded.*
- h) the letter “T” in permanent characters not less than 200 mm in height and in black colour on a yellow background.

5.0 Conduct of Towing Activities

5.1 Minimum crew requirements

A minimum of two (2) experienced crewmembers (one being the skipper and the second being the observer) shall be on board the craft at all times while conducting towing activities. It shall be the responsibility of the owner/operator to ensure that the crew members have the requisite training for this particular activity prior to employment.

5.2 Observer

The Observer shall be holder of basic life saving qualifications and shall carry out the following duties:

- (a) watch the skier or rider at all times and provide the skipper information with regards to the safety of the skier/rider.
- (b) Relay to the skipper the hand signals made by the skier/rider(s)
- (c) Warn other craft and boats of the presence of person(s) in water by flying an orange hand flag, of dimensions 60cm x 40cm.

5.3 Pre-activity safety briefing

Prior to the start of the activity, the skipper shall conduct a briefing with the skier or rider(s) covering, as a minimum, the following aspects:

- (a) the hand signals and their meanings.
- (b) the role of the observer especially when a person has fallen off.
- (c) the expected manoeuvre of the skipper to recover a person fallen off.
- (d) action by person fallen off to indicate his presence in water.

6.0 Weather Conditions

6.1 Monitoring of weather conditions

The licensee/person in charge shall:

- a) monitor the weather forecasts daily prior to taking the craft out at sea and constantly monitor the weather while at sea, as far as practicable.
- b) listen to radio broadcasts for updates on sea conditions at various intervals.

Whenever, during a towing session, the weather conditions deteriorate, the person-in-charge/skipper shall immediately cease the activity for safety reasons.

6.2 Pre Activity weather evaluation

- (a) It is the responsibility of the person in charge to evaluate and determine if weather conditions are favourable.
- (b) No skipper shall knowingly undertake towing activities during adverse weather conditions which affect visibility, strong currents and rough sea.

6.3 Cyclone warnings

No towing activity shall be conducted as from Cyclone Class 1 and all ongoing activities shall be interrupted.

6.4 Sea conditions

- (a) It shall be the responsibility of the person in charge to evaluate and determine if sea conditions are favourable for the conduct of the towing activities;
- (b) Towing activities shall not be carried as from *Force 4* on the Beaufort Wind Scale (*Moderate Breeze – 20 to 28 k/h and Small wavelets – 1 to 1.5 mts*) (**Annex C**)

7.0 Safety Equipment Requirements

7.1 Tow Rope Types

Approved ropes shall be, polypropylene high tensile type lines with a double braided low stretch construction. The minimum tensile strength of any towline shall be 4,800 lbs/21350 Newton (manufacturer's certificate to be submitted upon request by an authorised officer).

An in-service date shall be logged whenever a new line is installed.

7.2 Tow Rope Requirements, Inspection and Maintenance

Approved tow ropes for waterskiing shall meet the following specifications:

- (a) the diameter of any tow rope shall not be less than 10 mm.
- (b) the length of the towrope shall not exceed 25 metres.

Approved tow ropes for towing inflatable tubes shall meet the following specifications:

- (a) the diameter of any tow rope shall not be less than 10 mm.
- (b) the length of the tow rope shall not exceed 20 metres.

Tow ropes shall be inspected daily for any abrasions or signs of wear and tear and shall be replaced immediately if such signs have been noticed.

7.3 Parcelling of ropes

The section of the tow line from the strong point till the stern of the craft shall be protected to avoid any damage through rubbing with the gunwale surfaces.

7.4 Safety equipment

The licensee/person in charge shall use only approved items of equipment in good condition and in such quantities as may be prescribed.

At all times riders/skiers shall wear a properly fitted SOLAS approved life jacket or Personal Floating Device (PFD) of the following standards:

(PFD: Type 1 – EN395/396/399 or ISO 12402-4 and Type 2 – EN393 or ISO 12402-5)

7.5 Propeller Guard

Pleasure crafts licensed for towing activities shall be fitted with a propeller guard certified by the manufacturer.

8.0 Pleasure Crafts

The pleasure craft operator/skier/rider shall adhere to the Code of Conduct as per **Annex D**.

9.0 Conduct of the skipper and skier/rider(s)

- (a) No skipper shall, during the towing activity, allow any person to sit on the gunwales of the towing craft.
- (b) Towing activities shall, where high speed zones do not exist, be carried out, as far as practicable, parallel to the shore and in no case less than 100 metres from any shore.
- (c) A skipper shall, in the event of an accident, immediately report the fact to the NCG. (Section 89 of Tourism Authority Act 2006)
- (d) The skipper shall, as far as practicable, recover a skier or rider fallen off by either the U or S turn method which are established practices (**Annex E**).

10.0 Conducting of Towing activities under intoxication

The staff or participants shall not undertake the activity if they are unfit to operate or participate by reasons of being under the influence of an alcoholic drink or drug.

A skipper/operator may at his discretion prohibit any client from embarking his craft or undertake the activity if the client is suspected to be under the influence of alcohol/drugs.

11.0 Safety tips for water skiing and other towing activities

These safety tips shall be posted in all boathouses or at any other place where the activities are being proposed and shall be used in the course of the safety briefing. (**Annex F**)

12.0 Written Log Book

A written log book shall be kept at all times on board the craft or at the boathouse and shall contain the following:

- a) Daily equipment inspections;
- b) Weather readings every 4 hrs; and
- c) Maintenance report.

A model of a log book is at **Annex G**.

13.0 NPF/NPS

The operator shall ensure that staff is registered with the NPS/NPF/*TEWF*.

14.0 Insurance

The activity shall be covered by a comprehensive insurance policy covering third party liability of at least Rs 20 million per person.

15.0 Documents for inspection

The following documents shall be made available to the authorised officer for inspection:

- a) Written Log Book
- b) Pleasure Craft Licence or a copy
- c) Skipper's Licence.
- d) Insurance Policy
- e) Survey certificate
- f) Disclaimer Form

16.0 Exceptions

The following activities are considered as exceptions and may be exempted from certain provisions of the guidelines:

- a) The minimum age for undertaking towing activities may be reviewed to 3 years for the purpose of towing activities organised by Mini clubs or individual operators whereby such activities are conducted at a speed of less than 5 knots, inside the lagoon and with the tow rope not exceeding 10 meters. The participants shall wear a Personal Floating Device (PFD) as standard means of security.
- b) The maximum number of participants may be increased for the purpose of conducting promotional activities.

Ministry of Tourism and External Communications

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