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Safety Measures to Ensure Safe Operations during Bad Weather



All vessel Masters operating within the RAK Ports area must be alert and prepared for periods of severe weather during the coming winter season. Typically, from November to March, winds frequently blow in excess of 20 knots and occasionally rising or gusting above 40 knots during seasonal storms. Most weather events are forecast, but there are instances the wind exceeds the forecast, sometimes significantly. There are also occasions where weather events occur unexpectedly with little or no warning.

Experience shows poor planning results in accidents such as collision, sinking, grounding, mooring lines parting and dragging anchors. In order to prevent such accidents, good advanced planning and preparedness will help prevent incidents. Incidents put the lives of crew in danger, cause damage and incur great expense.

When alongside, vessels should be mindful of wind direction and be suitably ballasted. Extra moorings to be deployed and closely monitored for anticipated wind surge, gusts and squalls.

All vessels within RAK Ports limits are urged to heed the following advice.

Vessels, especially Tug / Barge must pay particular attention to:

- Anchors and chain checked and in good condition.
- The barge anchor release mechanism to be in good working order.

- Adequate power for operation of windlass and winches.
- Winch on barge tested and in good working with sufficient fuel.
- Bridles and rope checked and renewed if necessary.
- When anchored check navigation lights, keep a lookout and watch your barge.
- Tug to be made fast to and in close attendance with barge at all times.
- Emergency towing bridle to be rigged and ready to deploy.
- If anchor drags, put engine on immediate stand-by and inform port control. Consider paying out more anchor cable and/or deploy an extra anchor.
- Be prepared to heave anchor and put out to sea if conditions are not suitable to remain at anchor.
- Combinations to anchor in designated anchor zones.
- Prevailing and forecast weather, proximity of other vessels/combinations at anchor, proximity of subsea pipelines and any other navigational hazards should all be taken into account, before anchoring.
- Master of vessels and tugs must ensure sufficient fuel/water/provisions are in stock in case delays due to bad weather.
- Be aware of your environment and especially underwater obstructions such as pipelines.

Vessels alongside berth to consider:

- Ships mooring lines secured properly and tightened always.
- All mooring lines are in excellent condition and spare line available on board in case of emergency.
- Load on mooring lines to be checked continuously especially during bad weather.
- Chafing points are identified and either eliminated or friction minimised.
- Additional lines placed in case of bad weather, if necessary.
- Be prepared to proceed to sea in short notice.
- Vessels ballasted to reduce exposure to wind forces, especially offshore wind.

Ports and tenant companies to consider:

- Arrangements are in place to ensure all unmanned vessels are regularly checked. Extra monitoring and vigilance is required when poor weather anticipated. Consider the possibility to put a stand-by crew on board or be able to mobilise crew at short notice.
- Contact details are available to the port for owners and owners representatives in case of emergency.

Capt. Michael Magee
Harbour Master
RAK Ports