



# GOOD CATCH from **The American Club**

## Knowing the Barge Condition **BEFORE** Starting the Tow

### Description

**A deck barge carrying a tractor crane and associated equipment was being relocated** to a new job location. The barge owner had hired a towing vessel for the short ocean transit.

Prior to getting underway, the crew of the towing vessel used their company checklist to verify the barge was ready to be towed. It was getting late in the day and the captain was anxious to get underway and clear the harbor entrance in daylight.

The towing vessel crew verified that the crane was secure to the deck and that other associated gear was adequately strapped down. They noted that one of the oval-shaped hatch covers was missing. Another hatch cover at the bow rake was partly open and there was a hose leading down into the rake. They removed the hose but could not find additional nuts to properly secure the hatch cover. Instead, they put the hatch cover in position and finger-tightened the one nut that was there. They also noted that the barge had seen better days and had a lot of corrosion and numerous indentations on the main deck, the bow, and the sides.

They documented what they found on their checklist and also relayed the information to the Master. The Master indicated afterwards that he thought about notifying his Port Captain but assumed the barge would be okay since it was a short voyage, and the weather was expected to remain good.

They got underway with the towing vessel using a short towing hawser connecting to the barge. Once at sea, the Master increased the towline length and began their expected 36-hour voyage. At dawn the following morning, it was apparent to the towing vessel crew that the barge was riding down by the bow. The Master slowed the towing vessel's speed, and the crew monitored it throughout the morning. But, it appeared to them that the barge's trim by the bow was getting worse. Shortly after noon, the barge quickly rolled to starboard and capsized.



### Actual Damage

**The barge was salvaged but had to be scrapped. The tractor crane was also salvaged but was damaged beyond repair. The total damages exceeded \$2.8 M.**



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## Potential Damages

Had the Master of the towing vessel decided to place a crewmember on the barge to investigate what was causing the barge to take on water, the crewman could have been injured or killed when the barge suddenly capsized. It was also fortunate that pollution was minimized because the fuel storage tank on the barge was empty and the fuel tank on the crane only contained approximately 50 gallons of fuel when the barge capsized.

## Prevention

- ★ Did the crew adequately assess the condition of the barge before getting underway?
- ★ Were the issues with the hatch covers and the poor overall condition of the barge properly assessed?
- ★ Was there a reason a hose was rigged into one of the barge compartments? Was it there as a dewatering hose?
- ★ Could the barge's compartments have been inspected to see if they contained water?
- ★ Was the Master's haste to get underway a factor in deciding not to report the issues with the barge to the Port Captain?

When you identify a hazard before something goes wrong...

**it's a Good Catch.**

When you stop an operation before something bad happens...

**it's a Good Catch.**

When you properly assess the condition of the tow and address the problems before getting underway...

**that's a Good Catch, too!**



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