

MEMBER ALERT



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GOOD CATCH UPDATE: *BREAKAWAY BARGES!* – BREAKWAY AND ALLISION

Breakaway barges are dangerous. They can cause extensive damage and generate significant losses. Breakaways may result from frayed lines, poorly maintained bollards, or be caused by adverse weather conditions. Make a Good Catch by minimizing the possibility of breakaways through assessing the specific risks attendant upon where barge formations are to be located, including local current conditions and mooring arrangements.

In this context, the Managers are pleased to present the latest instalment of the Club's *Good Catch* initiative:

- [Breakaway Barges!](#) available on the Club's Good Catch Page (see below).

GOOD CATCH from The American Club
Breakaway Barges!
BREAKAWAY AND ALLISION

Description

Several barges broke loose and drifted downriver, striking and damaging a moored general cargo vessel and a pier.

An inland towing vessel was pushing eight empty barges when the crew temporarily moored the tow so they could retrieve additional barges. The additional barges were located less than 0.5 miles (0.8 km) upriver. Shortly after making up and securing the additional barges, the crew saw the eight barge tow break away from its mooring. The Master on the inland towing vessel radioed for assistance. Two nearby towing vessels responded, but neither could reach the drifting barges before they struck the moored general cargo vessel. The tow proceeded further downriver and struck a pier before the existing towing vessels were able to get the tow under control.

The investigation indicated several issues. The number of mooring lines used to secure the eight barges was insufficient for the wind and current. The mooring line used at the forward (upriver) end of the tow was in poor condition and parted. The mooring line at the aft (downriver) end of the tow was moored to a single bollard that was heavily corroded and could not handle the entire load of the eight barges. That bollard tore loose from the pier.

GOOD CATCH Breakaway Barges!
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Actual Damage

Two barges in the tow were damaged when they struck the moored vessel and the pier. Damages were \$101.2K for each barge. Repairs to the general cargo vessel were approximately \$28K, and the vessel's departure was delayed for four days which added another \$50K to the third-party claims. Damage to the pier exceeded \$50K due to the extensive concrete repair work needed.

Potential Damage

The third-party claims could have been substantially worse. The breakaway barges just missed striking the general cargo ship in the stern area, damaging the rudder and possibly the propeller. The timing was also fortunate because no other marine traffic was transiting in that part of the river when the barges broke loose.

How could this have been prevented?

- Before mooring the barges, the specific risks for that location and conditions should have been better assessed by the crew, and the mooring arrangement should have been adjusted considering:
 - a. the river current was substantially higher than usual;
 - b. the wind speeds were a steady 22-25 knots with gusts to 35 knots. Furthermore, the wind direction was on the forward quarter of the tow, pushing it away from the dock and downriver; and
 - c. with all eight barges empty, the effect of the wind was significant.
- Although the eight-barge tow was only intended to be moored for a short time, the mooring arrangement should have been as secure as if it were for a longer duration, particularly since the towing vessel crew would not be continuously monitoring it.
- The bollard that looked to be poorly maintained or in questionable condition should not have been used. If the maximum load of the bollard is not known, its use should be re-evaluated.
- The mooring lines that were frayed or worn should not have been used, even if only for a short time.
- If suitable bollards were not available, the Master should have reconsidered using that location to moor the tow.

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 assess the risks of mooring at each specific location and adjust the mooring accordingly, even if only mooring for a short time... **that's a Good Catch, too!**

THE AMERICAN CLUB

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As a reminder, all *Good Catch* alerts and animations are posted at the Club's website at:

https://www.american-club.com/page/good_catch