



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Suez Canal

Bulletin 528 - 06/07 - Incidents in the Suez Canal - Egypt

Over the last few years there have reportedly been several incidents where ships transiting the Suez Canal, under pilotage of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA), have either grounded, damaged navigational buoys or suffered other incidents.

The purpose of this circular is to briefly highlight some of the common problems that may face ships transiting the canal, which should be taken into consideration in order to prevent further occurrences.

The Suez Canal is governed by the [SCA Rules of Navigation](#). The latest version of the Rules should be carefully read prior to a planned transit, as a good understanding of the Rules is important in respect of loss prevention in relation to these issues.



Groundings

Groundings commonly result from ships experiencing problems with their rudder or other element of the steering system, or engine failure. Other causes have been identified as negligence on the part of the pilot, or poor visibility due to severe sand storms. As per the Rules of Navigation, whenever a ship grounds, SCA tugs are immediately imposed on the ship. Please note that Article 57 of the Rules states that chargeable tugs shall be imposed during canal transit in the following circumstances:

- The SCA may require any ship to take a tug or tugs through the canal when in its judgment such action is necessary to ensure the safety of the ship or the canal.
- Any ship without mechanical power, or the machinery of which is/or becomes disabled, or steers badly, or which is liable to become unmanageable for any reason, shall be towed through the canal.
- Ships having engine or steering gear trouble for the second time during the same passage.
- Ships with poor visibility from the navigating bridge due to deck cargo, containers, cranes, or other constructions.
- Ships unable to use one of both anchors; ships over 1500 SC G.T. built with one anchor; and ships over 1500 SC G.T. built with more than one anchor if only one of them is at the bow.
- Drilling ships.
- Ships with two engines on one propeller of which one is out of order for any reason, and cannot maintain a speed of 10 knots (at least without current) after sea trial to assure the speed and valid seaworthiness certificate; and ships with two engines on two propellers of which one is out of order.
- On Master's request for one tug or more.

Article 59(8) states that whenever a collision appears probable, ships must not hesitate to run aground should this be necessary to avoid it. This Article does not state that, in the event, any assistance by SCA tugs will be rendered free of charge, however, it has been noted from previous incidents that this service is not charged for.

Pollution incidents

Most pollution incidents result from groundings. However, Article 64(a) of the Rules states that ships must not discharge or throw into the canal waters any polluted ballast water, heavy slops, polluted bilge water, oil or any other substances that will cause pollution. The Egyptian Environmental Protection Act No.4, 1994 prohibits the discharge of any polluting substances into the water. The provisions of this act will apply for any discharge of polluting substances.

According to Article 69(2), the master, owners and/or operators shall be liable for the leakage of any polluting material from the ship, and shall pay all expenses incurred for its removal and all compensations. This includes cleaning costs and all claims for environmental economic losses caused by the pollution. Following a pollution incident, it is normal for the ship to be detained.

Damage to buoys

Damage to buoys, all of which are fitted with radar reflectors, occurs frequently and normally during a grounding or re-floating operation.

Damage to buoys does not normally result in the ship being detained. A letter of reserve holding the ship/ local transit agents liable for such damage is issued, and a joint inspection carried out. The cost of repairs is normally automatically debited from the local agent's account preserved in the SCA.

Damage to SCA tugs

This is a frequent cause of claims, and Members are directed to Article 55(5), which states that whatever the circumstances under which the canal authority tugs are made use of by a ship, the master of the ship is responsible for any damages or accidents whatsoever resulting directly or indirectly from the use of the tug(s), including damage to tugs and their equipment.

Injury to pilots & mooring crew

Pilotage is compulsory for all ships in most circumstances, and injury to pilots normally occurs at the pilot ladder. Ships transiting the canal are required to use mooring boats hired from the Suez Canal Mooring Company, which are manned by three men.

Article 4(1) of the Rules states that when in canal waters or at its ports or roads, any ship or floating structure of any description is responsible for any damage and consequential loss she causes directly or indirectly to herself, SCA property or personnel, or to that of third parties.

Additional Dues (Fines)

Fines are imposed for violation of the Rules of Navigation. A list of violations resulting in the imposition of additional dues can be found in Article 106 of the Rules. At the time this information was sourced, the fine imposed on a ship that moves in canal waters without a pilot on board, in contravention of the Rules, is set at US\$ 21,500.

View the Rules of Navigation online:

[http://www.lethsuez.com/Rules_Of_Navigation/ron_frames.htm]

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