



**SHIOWNERS**

SECURITY FOR SMALL & SPECIALIST VESSELS

## ► CASE STUDY

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**Collision caused by radio failure on board harbour craft:**  
This case highlights the need for all systems to be checked including battery charge especially when a vessel is going into service after an extended non-operational period.

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<b>Category</b>	<b>Operations</b>
<b>Vessel type</b>	<b>Harbour</b>
<b>Issue date</b>	<b>13/01/2015</b>
<b>Case number</b>	<b>107526</b>

### **The incident**

During night time operations, in calm weather conditions and good visibility, a tug was assisting a vessel from its anchorage to a loading berth. The tug was fastened on the starboard shoulder of the vessel. The tug master received a radio transmission from the pilot stating that the normal radio used for pilot to tug communications was giving a very weak signal. The pilot changed to a portable VHF but found transmissions continued to be faint and hard to hear. The tug master then changed over to a handheld radio which seemed to work better.

Approximately one hour later, at a critical stage of the operation when the tug was aiding the vessel with  $\frac{1}{4}$  power the handheld radio failed due to a lack of battery power. The tug was unable to receive orders from the pilot for a short period of time but once communications were re-established the pilot was requesting  $\frac{1}{2}$  power push on the port quarter. The tug master moved into position to carry out the pilot's orders but the delay resulted in the vessel contacting a dolphin and dislodging a buffer fender.

### **Observation**

On examination of the tug after the incident it was thought that the failure experienced in the communications systems was the result of low battery voltage. Insufficient charging resulted in weak signals from the tugs main radio and failure of the handheld VHF to be adequately charged. Prior to the operation the tug had been blacked out for two weeks and it was established that the batteries had not had enough time to charge before commencing operations.

### **Impact/action taken**

Damage to the dolphin buffer fender resulted in the berth being unfit for use until repairs could be carried out. This highlights the need for all systems to be checked including battery charge especially when a vessel is going into service after an extended non-operational period.

Costs associated with this claim totalled \$2,524 AUD and fortunately no claim for damage was ever pursued against the Member.

