

## Small Boat Incident:

Sept 20, 2009 the 11M RHIB departed for a dive trip offshore. Less than 5 minutes into the trip, alarms sounded indicating engine problems. Turning around to return to the dock, the engines shut down amazingly close to a floating dock where she was tied up and the shore contact called. The shore contact found another boat person to bring along, launched a 21' small boat, and towed the 11m RHIB back to the dock.

When retrieving the 21' small boat, the hitch came out of the receiver and the trailer rolled back down the ramp and into the water. The trailer ended up w/ the tongue in about 2' of water w/ the boat floating above it. The sole attachment point was at the bow. The trailer was equipped w/ cables coated w/ plastic in lieu of chains. The cables parted from the weight of the boat/trailer combination.

Upon investigation, this incident resulted from a chain of seemingly unrelated events culminating in a potentially serious incident:

1. The fuel was found to be contaminated in the RHIB, necessitating the "rescue".
2. The contaminated fuel was from a tank that had caused problems in the past, which were investigated and remedied w/ a "quick fix" and assurance from a vendor that future problems would not occur. Ongoing budget constraints resulted in the necessary maintenance being deferred too long to keep contaminated fuel out of the boat tanks.
3. When another boat was found to have contaminated fuel a few weeks back, the filters on the 11M were not changed and the boat continued to be used and filled from that tank; the circumstantial evidence was not deemed to be definitive.
4. The vehicle chosen to tow the 21' boat was a leased truck in an expired lease condition; the keys were not supposed to be given out, but in the haste of the moment, the maintenance shop personnel tried to help and passed out the keys.
5. Because the tow vehicle was not operable, permission was given to another small boat operator to "borrow" the pin in the hitch because they had lost the pin on their tow vehicle and did not have the funds to immediately purchase a new pin. The hitch was not removed because a bit of rust made it difficult to remove, and the truck was "out of service" anyway.
6. The trailer safety cables appeared to be in good condition, however, plastic coated metals in the marine environment are doomed to fail w/out notice because there is no easy way to inspect the condition of the metal under the plastic cover, and because salt and moisture are too easily trapped behind the plastic where it enters from the end or from a small tear in the cover.

## Recommendations:

1. Fuel tank has been locked out pending a solution to the contamination problem.
2. Maintenance staff has been asked to review their procedure for issuing vehicle keys to prevent vehicles being given out that are not ready for duty.
3. Small Boat Operators will be reminded to check for the pin when attaching boat trailers for towing.

4. Safety cables will be removed and replaced w/ chains that can be inspected and their condition verified.