1. This guidance sets formal policy on barge breakaways within the Sector Ohio Valley area of responsibility. It is designed to provide information and detail guidelines for the appropriate prevention and response actions required by Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Commanding Officers, Marine Safety Detachment (MSD) Supervisors or the Louisville Field Office (LFO) Supervisor for barge breakaways.

2. Each MSU Commanding Officer, MSD Supervisor and LFO Supervisor shall review this guidance and references (a) through (c), and tailor it to meet the specific needs unique to your AOR. Paragraph 3 below outlines procedures that shall be followed for effective prevention and response actions to barge breakaways.

3. The prevention and response actions outlined in this section should be tailored to meet the unique needs and demands of each unit commander’s specific area of responsibility. The critical ingredient to this guidance is an aggressive and ongoing outreach plan with vessel and fleeting area operators to ensure an open and ongoing dialogue emphasizing the importance of safety, vigilance, awareness, training, maintenance and use of proper equipment. The response section steps should be incorporated into your unit’s Quick Response Card system and be followed as a step-by-step guide on how to react when notified of a barge breakaway.

   a. Prevention of Barge Breakaways:

(1) Barge Breakaway Seminar. Each MSU Commanding Officer, MSD Supervisor and LFO Supervisor should consider facilitating a barge breakaway seminar on an annual basis, and at any other times deemed necessary. Seminar training should focus river industry personnel on the significance of barge breakaways and the importance of following established procedures to adequately secure barges. Seminars should target deckhands to company executives and include partnering with U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and other local experts. Invitees should include facility representatives that experienced a barge breakaway in the past two years. See enclosure (3) for a sample letter of invitation.

(2) Outreach to River Industry/Community. Maintain open communications with local and regional waterways associations, operating companies, and other affected entities to facilitate the timely dissemination of information. During outreach opportunities, encourage coordination and participation from tow vessel operators to render assistance in corralling breakaway barges and strongly consider signing acknowledgement letters whenever assistance is rendered.

(3) Joint Random Fleeting Area Inspections. Unit commanders will set the amount and frequency of random fleeting area safety inspections to be conducted based upon OPTEMPO and mission priorities. Inspection teams should incorporate a member from the USACE and check for the condition of the materials used to secure the barges, overall safety hazards for workers, training of employees, and compliance with the USACE fleeting permit. Enforcement action shall be taken as necessary. Collaboration with the USACE is preferable as they approve fleeting area permits; however, USCG inspectors are not dependent upon a USACE inspector’s
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presence to execute this mission. Refer to enclosure (4) for an example fleeting area inspection checklist.

(4) Lessons Learned. Maintain accurate records of barge breakaway incidents; data recorded from barge breakaways should be retained for possible future analysis of barge breakaway incidents. Follow MISLE User Guides on how to properly document these incidents in MISLE.

b. Response to Barge Breakaways:

(1) Hazards to Navigation:

(a) Communications:

(i) Sector Issues Urgent Marine Information Bulletin (UMIB). Upon notification of the incident, immediately notify the Sector Command Center (SCC). The SCC will issue a UMIB to alert vessels of the potential hazard to navigation and solicit for available vessels to render assistance.

(ii) Coordination between towing vessel operators. The SCC shall maintain the common operating picture of the situation and determine/monitor which vessels are rendering assistance to the incident.

(iii) Contact Lockmaster(s). The SCC shall notify the Lockmasters above and below the incident as soon as possible. Information may be gathered to assist in the response and investigation, to include the vessels that are transiting in the area.

(iv) Field Unit Notification. The SCC will immediately notify the affected field unit of the barge breakaway for a field response per reference (c).

(b) Account for barges. The SCC shall maintain accurate accountability, status, and location of all barges and vessels involved in the barge breakaway incident response actions.

(2) Marine Casualty Investigation. The affected Marine Safety Unit or Detachment shall determine if the incident meets the definition of a reportable marine casualty (46 CFR 4.05-1).

(3) Captain of the Port Order:

(a) Shut down operations. Once all emergency safety concerns have been addressed, a Captain of the Port Order shall be issued to the operator of the facility that stops all operations at the facility. A COTP template is attached (Enclosure (1)).

(b) Release from Order. The fleeting area will be released from the COTP order when the following conditions are met:

(i) Identify how the barges broke free from their mooring.

(ii) Correct the issues that led to the barge breakaway.
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(iii) Provide a solution to prevent future barge breakaways.

(4) Civil Penalty Proceedings and/or Letter of Concern. Depending on the result of the investigation surrounding the barge breakaway, determine if civil penalty proceedings and/or issuing a Letter of Concern to the operating company is appropriate.

Enclosure: (1) Example Template Captain of the Port Order
(2) Example Quick Response Card
(3) Example Invitation Letter to Barge Breakaway Seminar
(4) Example Checklist for fleeting area inspections
FLEETING AREA INSPECTION CHECKLIST

- Review ACOE Fleeting Permit
- Verify that company personnel are familiar with requirements in the Fleeting Permit
- Verify that the fleeting area operators are trained on how to tend the fleet during different river conditions
- Check fleet for personnel hazardous conditions
- Verify that the mooring cell fixed mooring equipment is in good condition
- Verify that the lines used to moor barges together are in good condition

AGENCY ACTION USE:
FACILITY NAME: _________________________________________________________________
RIVER: ___________________________ MILE: _________ BANK: _______________
DIRECTIONS: _________________________________________________________________

FLEETING AREA POC: ________________________________ PHONE: ____________________
DESCREPANCIES NOTED? _________________________________________________________
MISLE DOCUMENTATION COMPLETE? _____________________________________________

NOTES:
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