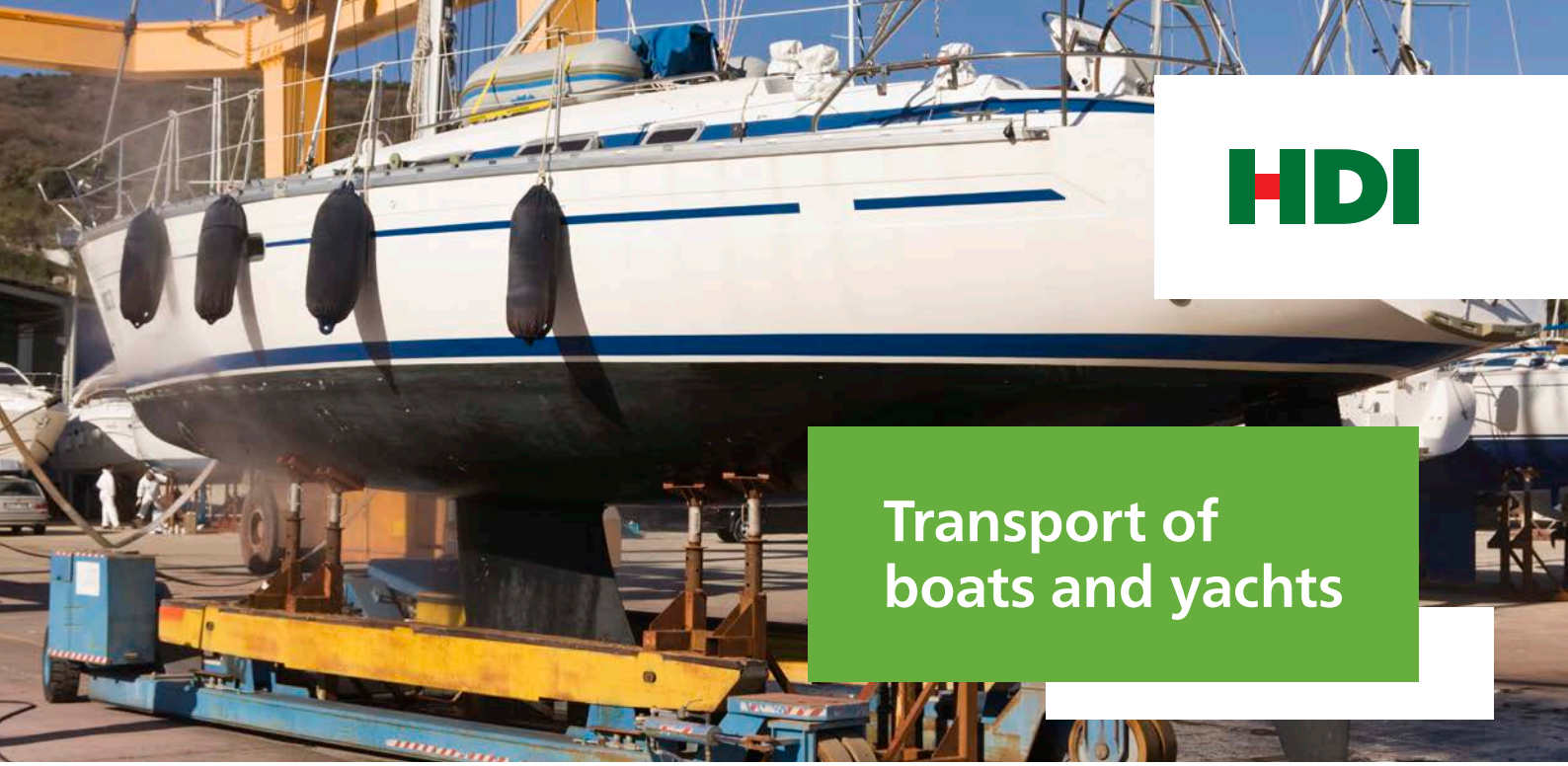
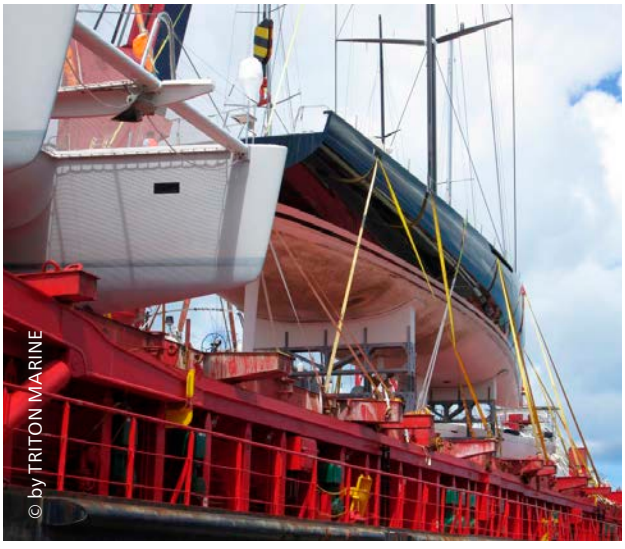


Transport of boats and yachts

HDI Risk Consulting → Marine

Transporting large boats and yachts is basically comparable to other high & heavy transports. However, some special instructions must be observed not only because the consignees demand the highest quality, but also because the special sensitivity of the goods to be transported must be taken into consideration. The risk engineers at HDI Risk Consulting have summarised these requirements in the present Specialist Information.

- In both sea and road transport, lifting operations and load securing are of paramount importance. Detailed calculation and planning must be available in advance as a „method statement".
- If lifting is carried out with the transporting ship's own gear (crane), the residual stability of the vessel must be calculated in advance and predefined minimum values must be observed.
- When lifting and stowing, the hull shape of the boat or yacht is of particular importance. The shape of the hull may require the use of special devices (cradles etc.).



Cargo securing of a sailing yacht on the deck of a multipurpose vessel using a prefabricated stowage frame (cradle).

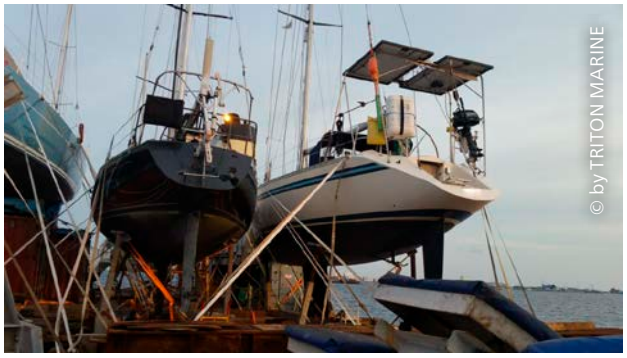
- The centre of gravity of the boat must be known to enable correct placement of the straps on the hull in order to prevent the boat from slipping out of the straps during lifting. Straps may only be placed around the yacht hull in the designated areas, which are either marked by the manufacturer or explicitly defined as being suitable in the lifting plan due to reinforced areas (frames and stringers).
- Depending on the value of the goods to be transported and the complexity of the transport, an experienced expert must be involved to check both the planning documents prior to loading and the implementation of the transport on site.
- It is imperative that orders are placed only with logistics service providers (LSP) and shipping companies that are experienced in the transport of boats and yachts and can provide evidence of this experience.
- For sea transport, a desktop assessment, e.g., with HRC Shipeval, of the transporting vessel is recommended before booking that vessel.
- For sea transport, multi-purpose heavy lift vessels or, in the case of mega yachts, special dock ships are to be preferred.
- When using dock ships for transporting larger water-craft, the involvement of HDI Risk Consulting as well as an independent Marine Warranty Surveyor (MWS) is strongly recommended. A separate risk assessment must always be carried out in such cases, as float-in / float-out shipping is fundamentally different from conventional loading.

Tandem lift of a large motor yacht by a heavy lift vessel. Sufficient stability of the ship during the lifting process is ensured by the additional use of a stability pontoon (in the background).

- Stowage below deck should be possible in most cases and is preferable to stowage on deck. Lower acceleration values with an effect on the transported goods are to be expected below deck. In addition, the boats and yachts are better protected from the weather below deck.
- The cleanliness, the corrosion status and at least adequate weather tightness of the holds must be checked before loading.
- The protection of sensitive and high-value parts such as the propeller and propeller shaft, mast, rudder or navigation equipment is particularly important.
- Access by unauthorised persons (e.g., the decksmen of the transporting ship) to the interior of the yachts and boats during transport must be prevented. The keys of the watercraft must be kept safe by the ship's command.
- Loose equipment on the deck of yachts and boats must be safely stowed and locked away.
- A documentation of the condition and equipment of the boats and yachts should always be prepared before the transport. The use of divers may also be necessary for this purpose. This applies to both new and used watercraft.
- To ensure load securing during transport that is adequate to the strain, boats and yachts must have sufficiently strong lashing points which must be tested and certified for the required strain. Especially on yachts made of glass-fibre reinforced plastic (GRP), so-called cleats may not be able to withstand the required lashing forces and intended directions of the strain and may tear out of the deck.
- When lifting and securing loads, care must be taken to ensure that boats and yachts, especially their hulls, cannot be damaged by taut straps. Stable edge protectors over which the straps are guided must be used here. When lifting, wooden blocks, hard foam blocks or airbags placed below exposed areas between the straps and the yacht hull may be more useful to distribute the load as evenly as possible.
- Minor scratches or dents can quickly appear on the sensitive surfaces.
- Carefulness, cleanliness and accuracy play a decisive role in loading, load securing, during transport and unloading.
- During transport, only a minimum amount of water, fuels and lubricants may remain in the watercraft. As a general rule, yachts should only carry the amount of fuels and lubricants required to enable reaching the nearest marina after unloading. Furthermore, full bunkers can change the centre of gravity and the watercraft can also become significantly heavier, which in turn has a negative impact on the loading process.
- The on-board electronics must be secured against short-circuits and shut down for transport. In particular, de-energising of the yacht shall include the safe isolation from the supply of the starter and service batteries. In some cases, it is possible to request in advance that special areas of the yachts (e.g. air conditioning or fire monitors) be supplied with electricity from the ship during transport. This always requires a separate hazard assessment.

Lowering a motor yacht on the deck of a heavy lift vessel.

- Boat tarpaulins, convertible tops, spray hoods, etc. may tear during transport due to the wind. Boats and yachts are sometimes shrink-wrapped in resistant foil for transport in order to protect them against external influences. However, the disadvantage is that the yacht is no longer accessible to the ship's crew if necessary and, in addition, possible lashing points can no longer be used. In order to protect sensitive areas, we believe it is better to cover them with sufficiently strong plastic sheets.
- When transporting boats and yachts as deck cargo and above a certain size and value, weather routing is of particular importance. Weather-dependent route planning must be guaranteed, and it must be defined in advance which weather conditions are to be avoided in any case (wave height, roll angle, wind strength, etc.).
- Smaller boats and yachts are also transported on flat rack containers. This in turn involves an increased risk of stowage even above the level of the main deck and exceptional exposure to rolling motion and weather effects during the sea voyage.



Stowage and securing of sailing yachts on the deck of a multi-purpose vessel.

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