

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
Washington 25, D. C.

OPNAV 3171.1A  
Op-342  
Ser 236P34  
1 April 1959

OPNAV INSTRUCTION 3171.1A

From: Chief of Naval Operations  
To: All Ships and Stations (less Marine Corps field addressees  
not having naval personnel attached)

Subj: Standard tug boat signals

Encl: (1) Subject instructions

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Instruction is to promulgate joint Standard Tug Boat Signals which, as noted on enclosure (1), has the following media designations: Army Technical Bulletin TC 16; OPNAV Instruction 3171.1A; Air Force Regulation 75-59; and Coast Guard Operation Instructions 1-59.

2. Cancellation. OPNAV Instruction 3171.1 of 16 May 1958 is hereby canceled and superseded by this Instruction.

3. Joint Instruction. The joint instruction is transmitted herewith as enclosure (1) for information, guidance, and compliance.

WALLACE M. BEAKLEY  
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations  
(Fleet Operations and Readiness)

Additional copies may be obtained from:  
NSC, Norfolk, Va.  
GSD, NSC, Oakland, Calif.  
Supply Dept., NGF, Washington, D. C.

Enclosure (1)

TB TC 16  
OPNAVINST 3171.1A  
AFR 75-59  
COAST GUARD OI 1-59

TECHNICAL BULLETIN TC 16  
OPNAV INSTRUCTION 3171.1A  
AIR FORCE REGULATION 75-59  
COAST GUARD OPERATION  
INSTRUCTIONS 1-59

DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY,  
THE NAVY, THE AIR FORCE,  
AND THE TREASURY  
WASHINGTON, 1 April 1959

## STANDARD TUG BOAT SIGNALS

	Paragraph
Purpose - - - - -	1
Information - - - - -	2
Scope - - - - -	3
Action - - - - -	4
Joint Signals	Enclosure (1)

1. Purpose. These instructions promulgate a standard set of whistle and hand signals to be used in directing tugs.

2. Information. On occasion it is necessary to utilize the services of tugs in handling ships and craft without the assistance of a local pilot. In the past, there has been no standard set of signals to use in directing tug movements. The signals used have varied with locality and ports. This fact has indicated a need for a standard set of tug boat signals that would be simple, would not be subject to misinterpretation, and would conform with signals now in general use by pilots. To this end a standard set of tug signals is hereby promulgated jointly by the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and the Chief of Naval Operations.

3. Scope. The signals listed in enclosure (1) are applicable within the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard. Civilian tug and pilot associations and other agencies are to be encouraged to use these signals. Widest possible dissemination of the tug boat signals is desired. Accordingly, authority to reprint signals contained in this Instruction is hereby granted.

4. Action. With reference to the signals attached as enclosure (1):

a. Masters of tugs providing services to ships and craft of the four services will be thoroughly familiar with and respond to the signals.

b. The signals shall be used when hand or whistle signals are used to direct the movement of tugs.

Enclosure (1)

TB TC 16  
OPNAVINST 3171.1A  
AFR 75-59  
COAST GUARD OI 1-59

c. Pilots, both service and civilian, of the four services shall use the signals as a basis for their hand and whistle signals to tugs. However, pilots are authorized to modify them as necessary to meet conditions peculiar to a particular port or condition.

d. When it is desired to use these signals with tugs other than those belonging to or operated by the four services, it shall first be ascertained that the tug master understands and will respond to the signals.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE ARMY, THE NAVY,  
THE AIR FORCE, AND THE TREASURY:

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Chief, Office of Operations.

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Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard.

Enclosure (1)

## TUG BOAT SIGNALS

## HAND WHISTLE (Police Type)

FROM STOP TO HALF SPEED AHEAD	1 BLAST
FROM HALF SPEED AHEAD TO STOP	1 BLAST
FROM HALF SPEED AHEAD TO FULL SPEED AHEAD	4 SHORT BLASTS
FROM FULL SPEED AHEAD TO HALF SPEED AHEAD	1 BLAST
FROM STOP TO HALF SPEED ASTERN	2 BLASTS
FROM HALF SPEED ASTERN TO FULL SPEED ASTERN	4 SHORT BLASTS
FROM HALF OR FULL SPEED ASTERN TO STOP	1 BLAST
CAST OFF, STAND CLEAR	1 PROLONGED 2 SHORT

## NOTES:

1. A blast is 2 to 3 seconds duration.  
A prolonged blast is 4 to 5 seconds duration.  
A short blast is about one second duration.
2. In using whistle signals to direct more than one tug, care must be exercised to ensure that the signal is directed to and received by the desired tug. Whistles of a different distinct tone have been used successfully to handle more than one tug.
3. These signals may be transmitted to the tug by flashing light. However, flashing light signals should be restricted to use only when hand whistle or hand signals cannot be used.
4. Normally these whistle signals will be augmented by the hand signals given below.

## HAND SIGNALS

HALF SPEED AHEAD OR ASTERN-  
Arm pointed in direction  
desired



TUG TO USE RIGHT RUDDER -  
Hand describing circle as  
if turning wheel to right  
(clockwise) facing in the  
same direction as tug



FULL SPEED (Either) -  
Fist describing arc (as  
in "bouncing" an engine  
telegraph)



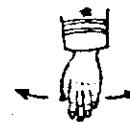
TUG TO USE LEFT RUDDER -  
Hand describing circle as  
if turning wheel to left  
(counterclockwise) facing  
in same direction as tug



DEAD SLOW (Either) -  
Undulating movement of  
open hand (palm down)



TUG TO RUDDER AMIDSHIP -  
Arm at side of body with  
hand extended, swung back  
and forth



STOP (Either)  
Open palm held aloft  
facing tug



CAST OFF, STAND CLEAR -  
Closed fist with thumb  
extended, swung up and down



NOTE: Tug shall acknowledge all of the above signals with one short toot (one second or less) from its whistle, with the exception of the backing signal which shall be acknowledged with two short toots and the cast-off signal which shall be acknowledged by one prolonged and two short toots.