

MEMBER ALERT

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UNDERSEA CABLES OFF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

Your Managers have been informed of a recent claim lodged against a vessel for snagging a fiber optic cable with its anchor off the coast of the UAE where there is an extensive network of fiber optic cables on the seabed. They are marked on the charts of the area. In particular, chart BA 3175 clearly advises vessels not to anchor or trawl within the vicinity of these cables.

The vessel in question was anchored 25 miles from Sharjah pilot station approximately one mile from a section of cable connecting Kuwait and Bandar Abbas.

As a result of heavy winds, the vessel drifted, dragging its anchor onto a section of cable. The cable operator was able to pinpoint the contact area to within a few meters and a cable laying vessel in the area was dispatched to the relevant coordinates to investigate.

The company that owns and operates the cables lodged a criminal complaint against the Master and Owner and the vessel was immobilized and the Master arrested.

The structure of the cable network means that although the length of damaged cable was not significant, around 1.5 kilometers of cable will need to be replaced. The vessel faces a claim for the cost of cable replacement using the cable laying vessel. The final claim will more than likely run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It is recommended that all vessels should exercise great caution in the vicinity of undersea cables and should take care to anchor at a safe distance. Prevailing, and forecast, winds should be taken into account when calculating a safe distance, and the possibility of drifting in heavy winds should be factored into these calculations.