

One Day

I work for one of the country's leading waste management, recycling and energy- from waste-companies. We operate across the country, providing expert services in the collection, recycling and disposal of waste as well as municipal cleansing. Our businesses stretch from Kent and London to as far north as Merseyside and as far south as Cornwall. Our transfer stations are based in London and Cirencester. In all we have thirty three sites.

I am based in the Essex office and work for Compliance also known as Health & Safety. I am a compliance officer and work in a team of 10. people. We carry out Compliance work on the behalf of our businesses .We assist and guide the staff and management with their health, safety and environmental issues.

Cory Environmental is the only company that transfers waste on the River Thames, keeping over 100,000 HGVs off the capital's already congested roads each year. The rubbish is compacted on our transfer stations then collected and transferred down the river by container barges to our landfill site which is appropriately named Mucking down in Essex.

. The area of the business I find most interesting is the lighterage and bargeyard operations based in Charlton.

I was fortunate enough to be on board two of our tugs and this meant I had to be at the yard for about 05.45, as the lighter age crew are dependant on the tides.

When the tugs first cast off from the jetty they have no loads – the barges are moored on various pontoons up and down the Thames for the crews to collect on their journeys. The crew then make their way to the first pick up as these are usually empty containers to take back to the transfer stations.

To pick them up, the Captain manoeuvres the tug till it is just below the container barges so that the crew can literally climb up and on and start releasing the barges to take up river.



The crew go from container barge to container barge ensuring that the ones they are towing are securely tied to one another and as they start freeing themselves the captain manoeuvres the tug so that one crew member can jump down safely onto the tug to secure the load to it.

Some of the bridges on the Thames are not wide enough to take three container barges through. So the pontoons are positioned before these and two of the barges are tethered to the pontoon whilst the tug takes one through. The barge is then moored to another pontoon on the other side of the bridge and then the captain goes back to take another one through and the whole process is repeated until all the barges are through and then they are re-tied to the tug until they reach the transfer stations.

Once the load is secure then the barges are towed to the appropriate transfer stations and are then swapped over with full containers to take down river to the landfill site.



The containers are loaded onto the barges by an overhead crane and carefully positioned inside the craft.



Then the process of towing them down river starts again.

All crew members are highly skilled and knowledgeable men not only about the tides but about the physics of a tug under tow with regard to tension in the ropes. They know for example that if a tug is towing and has to turn into the transfer station that the third barge tow rope has to be slackened off to allow it to turn.

If this does not happen, with the tension in the rope, the container barge could easily come across the first two barges and go over the tug. Also there is an area on the aft side of the tug that whilst towing becomes prohibited. This is so because if the rope for whatever reason breaks free then the tension snaps forward and could easily kill someone.

This operation is carried out daily without fail and the only time the operation ceases is when it is foggy.