

Safety Alert

Number: 25-05

Published: 25/03/2025

Subject: Safe Boarding Arrangements for Marine Pilots

Narrative

Defective / Non-compliant Pilot Ladders & Boarding Arrangements



A number of incidents / safety concerns / observations have been reported recently indicating an increasing trend of vessels presenting unsafe pilot boarding arrangements which do not meet the requirements set out in The International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Regulation V / 23 and IMO Resolution A. 1045(27) (as amended).

Deficiencies and non-compliant boarding arrangements, unsafe rigging of pilot ladders and a notable increase in poor quality rope ladder management has been recognised and detected within the industry.

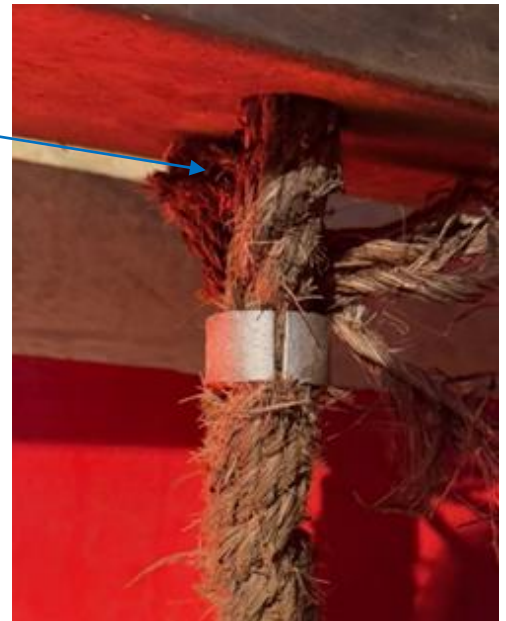
The transfer of a Marine Pilot between a pilot boat and a ship presents significant risks that need to be managed carefully. Pilot ladders are specifically designed for the purpose of safe embarkation and disembarkation of Pilots (or personnel).

Ships have a duty to rig their pilot ladders in accordance with the regulations and legislative requirements. Responsibility for the safe transfer of Marine Pilots rests with each person directly involved in the activity which includes pilots, pilot boat crew, master & crew, pilotage providers, Competent Harbour Authorities (CHA), vessel owners & operators as well as the individual being transferred. All parties should be conversant with the regulations and ensure safety is not compromised.

Shipping companies have a legal obligation to provide a conforming ladder and ship-borne fittings.

Non-compliant or (potentially) unsafe ladders and boarding arrangements or any near miss incident associated with a Pilot transfer, must be reported to the Competent Harbour Authority (CHA) and Maritime & Coastguard Agency as soon as it is safe to do so.

Pilot ladder step winnet missing and rope showing clear signs of degradation and materially in a poor state of repair.



All arrangements and appliances used for pilot transfer should be kept clean, be properly maintained, be stowed correctly, and shall be regularly inspected to ensure that they are safe to use. Rigging of the pilot transfer arrangements and the embarkation / disembarkation of a Pilot shall be supervised by a Responsible Officer having means of communication with the navigational bridge.

Masters / vessels which are to embark a Marine Pilot should be asked to confirm that their pilot ladder is properly constructed, recently inspected, in good condition and is rigged in accordance with the SOLAS and IMO requirements.

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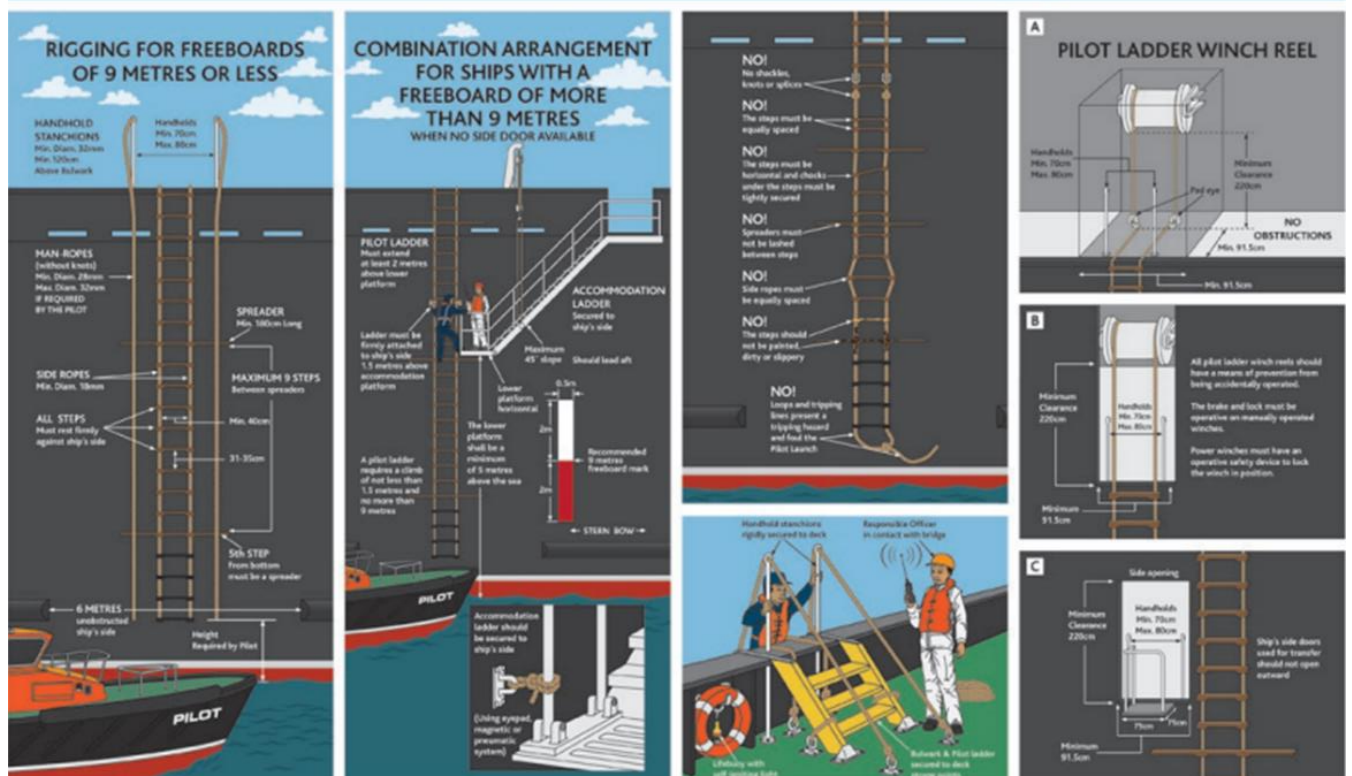
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Reference

- International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea – SOLAS Chapter V – Safety of Navigation / Reg. 23 – Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- Statutory Instrument (SI) – 2020 No. 673 – The Merchant Shipping (Safety of Navigation) Regulations 2020
- Merchant Shipping Note (MSN) 1874 (M+F) (as amended) – Marine Equipment – United Kingdom Conformity Assessment Procedures for Marine Equipment, Other Approval and Standards
- International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Resolution A. 1045(27) (as amended) & Resolution A. 1108(29) & MSC.1 / Circ. 1428 – Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- BS ISO 799-1: 2019 & BS ISO 799-3: 2022 (Ships & Marine Technology — Pilot Ladders)
- The Embarkation & Disembarkation of Pilots – Code of Safe Practice
- The International Chamber of Shipping – Bridge Procedures Guide
- Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seaman (MCA)
- Port Marine Safety Code & Guide to Good Practice (DfT & MCA)
- The Pilot Ladder Manual

REQUIRED BOARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PILOT

In accordance with SOLAS Regulation V/23 & IMO Resolution A.1045(27)
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION
H.Q.S. "Wellington" Temple Stairs, Victoria Embankment, London WC2R 2PN Tel: +44 (0)20 7240 3973 Fax: +44 (0)20 7210 3518 Email: office@impahq.org
This document and all IMO Pilot-related documents are available for download at: <http://www.impahq.org>



RIGGING FOR FREEBOARDS OF 9 METRES OR LESS

- Handhold Stanchions: Min. Diam. 33mm, Min. 100mm Above Deck
- Handholds: Min. 70cm, Max. 80cm
- Main Ropes (without knots): Min. Diam. 18mm, Min. Diam. 16mm if required by the pilot
- Side Ropes: Min. Diam. 16mm
- All Steps: Must not flex against ship's side
- Maximum 9 Steps Between spreaders
- Spreader: Min. 100cm Long
- 5th Step from bottom must be a spreader
- 6 METRES unobstructed ship's side
- Height Required by Pilot

COMBINATION ARRANGEMENT FOR SHIPS WITH A FREEBOARD OF MORE THAN 9 METRES WHEN NO SIDE DOOR AVAILABLE

- Pilot Ladder: Must extend at least 2 metres above lower platform
- Ladder must be firmly attached to ship's side 1.5 metres above accommodation platform
- Accommodation Ladder: Secured to ship's side, Maximum 45° slope, Should lead aft
- Lower platform: Must be a minimum of 5 metres above the sea
- 0.3m Recommended 2 metre freeboard mark
- Stern Bow
- Accommodation ladder should be secured to ship's side
- Using ratchet, magnetic or pneumatic systems

NO! No shackles, knots or splices

NO! The steps must be equally spaced

NO! The steps must be horizontal and checked under the steps must be tightly secured

NO! Spreader must not be lashed between steps

NO! Side ropes must be equally spaced

NO! The steps should not be painted, dirty or slippery

NO! Longs and tripping lines prevent a tripping hazard and find the Pilot Launch

Handhold stanchions rigidly secured to deck

Responsible Officer in contact with bridge

Warning with self-lighting lights

Rubbers & Pilot ladder secured to deck using points

A PILOT LADDER WINCH REEL

- Handholds: Min. 70cm, Max. 80cm
- Prof eye
- Minimum Clearance 220cm
- NO OBSTRUCTIONS
- Min. 91.5cm

B

- Minimum Clearance 220cm
- Handholds: Min. 70cm, Max. 80cm
- Minimum 91.5cm
- All pilot ladder winch reels should have a means of prevention from being accidentally operated
- The brake and lock must be operative on a manually operated winch
- Power winches must have an operative safety device to lock the winch in position

C

- Side opening
- Minimum Clearance 220cm
- Handholds: Min. 70cm, Max. 80cm
- Ship's side doors used for transfer should not open outward
- Minimum 91.5cm

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