SHIPPING INDUSTRY GUIDANCE ON
PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS
ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH SOLAS

International Chamber of Shipping
International Maritime Pilots’ Association

Also supported by

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The following guidance has been produced by the International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA) in collaboration with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS).

GENERAL

Pilots come aboard ship to assist the crew during the most critical and potentially hazardous phases of a voyage. Qualified pilots possess particular local knowledge and have the necessary ship-handling skills to assist the safe arrival and departure of vessels.

Normally, pilots board and disembark using a traditional rope ladder from and to a pilot boat. However, this can be a very dangerous procedure if those involved do not adhere to International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards or fail to practise acceptable seamanship skills.

A number of pilots have died as a result of accidents while boarding/disembarking from ships, and many more have been seriously injured.

Furthermore, deficiencies with regard to boarding arrangements and unsafe rigging of pilot ladders continue to be detected during port state control inspections, resulting in delays and financial penalties for the ship operator.

Nevertheless, pilot ladders remain the most safe and efficient way to board ships at sea and there is usually no alternative, except on occasions when a helicopter is used.

The following guidance is intended to remind seafarers and shipping companies of the vital importance of adhering to the rules and established procedures concerning the provision of safe boarding arrangements for pilots.
ENSURING SAFE RIGGING FOR PILOTS

The IMO Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 23) sets out the principal requirements for the rigging of pilot ladders. These provisions are set out in the diagram contained in this brochure. This diagram can be downloaded at www.impahq.org (on home page, click ‘Downloads’). It is also reproduced in the ICS Bridge Procedures Guide.

There is further detailed technical specification for pilot ladders in IMO Resolution A.1045(27). Shipping companies have a legal obligation to provide a conforming ladder and ship-borne fittings. If seafarers are uncertain about any of the requirements, they should always ask their supervising officer for advice.

The two major causes of accidents are defects in the ladder treads or sideropes (see diagram) or a lack of proper attachment of the ladder to the vessel.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Shipping companies should ensure that:

• Ladders are SOLAS compliant
• The inspection regime and records are adequate
• Replacement ladders are quickly and readily available on board
• Seafarers involved receive the necessary training and have a full understanding of the requirements.

IMPA is able to provide an advice document for new construction designs.

ON BOARD ISSUES

The Master and officers should:

• Closely supervise the rigging of pilot ladders
• Closely observe the shipping/landing of pilots from ladders, ensuring that SOLAS requirements are met
• Maintain a lee until the pilot vessel is well clear.

At all times during the rigging, use and de-rigging of any pilot transfer arrangements there should be no risk to the ship’s crew. Crew members should not normally be required to leave the protection of the ship’s safety rails or bulwarks. A life line or safety harness should be worn if there is any risk of falling.

NEW SOLAS REQUIREMENTS FROM 1 JULY 2012

Ships constructed after the 1 July 2012 must comply with the new equipment and arrangement requirements of SOLAS Regulation V/23. Equipment and arrangements replaced on or after the 1 July 2012 on existing ships, shall, so far is reasonable and practicable, comply with the requirements of this regulation.

These requirements include the securing of an accommodation ladder to the ship’s side, when used in conjunction with the pilot ladder, and the prohibited use of mechanical pilot hoists.

SUMMARY

Pilots have the right to decline to board vessels offering defective ladders, which can result in serious delay. Pilots are also entitled to report defects in boarding ladders to port state control authorities, which could lead to a full PSC inspection with the risk of delay and financial penalties.

A pilot who has climbed a sound ladder, well rigged, and attended by an officer and a deck party will be in the right frame of mind to give his best attention to the safety of the vessel.
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.: 32mm
- Min. 70cm Above Bulwark

**Man-Ropes** (without knots)
- Min. Diam.: 28mm
- Max. Diam.: 32mm

**Side Ropes**
- Min. Diam.: 18mm

**Minimum 9 Steps**
- Between spreaders
- Min. 40cm
- 31-35cm

**Maximum**
- 220cm
- Minimum 91.5cm

**MINIMUM**
- 91.5cm
- 75cm

**Pilot Ladder**
- Must extend at least 2 metres above lower platform
- 6 METRES unobstructed ship’s side

**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
- 6 METRES unobstructed ship’s side

**ACCOMMODATION LADDER**
- Signed to ship’s side
- Height Required by Pilot

**Spreaders**
- Min. 180cm Long
- Minimum 180cm

**Side Opening**
- Ship’s side doors used for transfer

**Combination**

**FOR SHIPS WITH A FREEBOARD OF MORE THAN 9 METRES**

**When No Side Door Available**

**Maximum**
- 45˚ slope
- Lower platform horizontal

**Minimum**
- 91.5m

**Recommended**
- 220cm
- Minimum 91.5cm

**Handhold Stanchions**
- Rigidly secured to deck

**Lifeliness with self-igniting light**

**Responsible Officer** in contact with bridge

**Balcony & Pilot ladder** secured to deck strong points

**Accommodation ladder**
- Rigidly secured to deck

**Handholds**
- Min. 70cm
- Max. 80cm

**Minimum Clearance**
- 220cm
- Minimum 91.5m

**Side Ropes**
- Min. Diam.: 18mm

**ALL STEPS**
- Must rest firmly against ship’s side

**WINCH REEL**
- Minimum Clearance
- Minimum 91.5cm

**Minimum**
- 91.5cm

**Power winches**
- Must have an operative safety device to lock the winch in position.

**Manually operated winches**
- The brake and lock must be operative.

**All pilot ladder winch reels** should have a means of prevention from being accidentally operated.

**NO!**
- Horizontal spreaders must be firmly attached to ship’s side
- Side ropes must be equally spaced
- Steps must not be painted, dirty or slippery
- Spreaders must not be lashed between steps
- Steps must be equally spaced
- Chocks under the steps must be tightly secured
- Steps must be horizontal
- Loop and tripping lines present a tripping hazard
- Shackles, knots or splices
- The ladder must be firmly attached to ship’s side

**All pilot ladder winch reels** should have a means of prevention from being accidentally operated.

**The brake and lock must be operative on manually operated winches.**

**Power winches** must have an operative safety device to lock the winch in position.

**NO!**
- Spreaders must not be lashed between steps
- Steps must be equally spaced
- Side ropes must be equally spaced
- Handholds
- Min. 70cm
- Max. 80cm

**Minimum**
- 91.5m

**Recommended**
- 220cm
- Minimum 91.5cm

**Minimum**
- 91.5cm

**Ladder must be firmly attached to ship’s side**
- Minimum 91.5cm

**Handholds**
- Min. 70cm
- Max. 80cm

**Minimum Clearance**
- 220cm
- Minimum 91.5cm

**Recommended**
- 220cm
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**Minimum**
- 91.5cm
DISCLAIMER

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Marisec Publications
38 St Mary Axe
London, EC3A 8BH
Tel +44 20 7090 1460
Fax +44 20 7090 1484
publications@marisec.org
www.ics SHIPPING.org

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