

August 2025

Proper Maintenance and Rigging of Pilot Transfer Arrangements

This bulletin is issued as a reminder and to reinforce awareness of the potential risks associated with the improper maintenance and rigging of pilot transfer arrangements.

This safety update is for

- Ship owners, operators and all personnel involved in the rigging and use of pilot transfer arrangements
- Surveyors and Recognised Organisations (ROs)
- Maritime Administrations, their officers, investigators and technical advisors

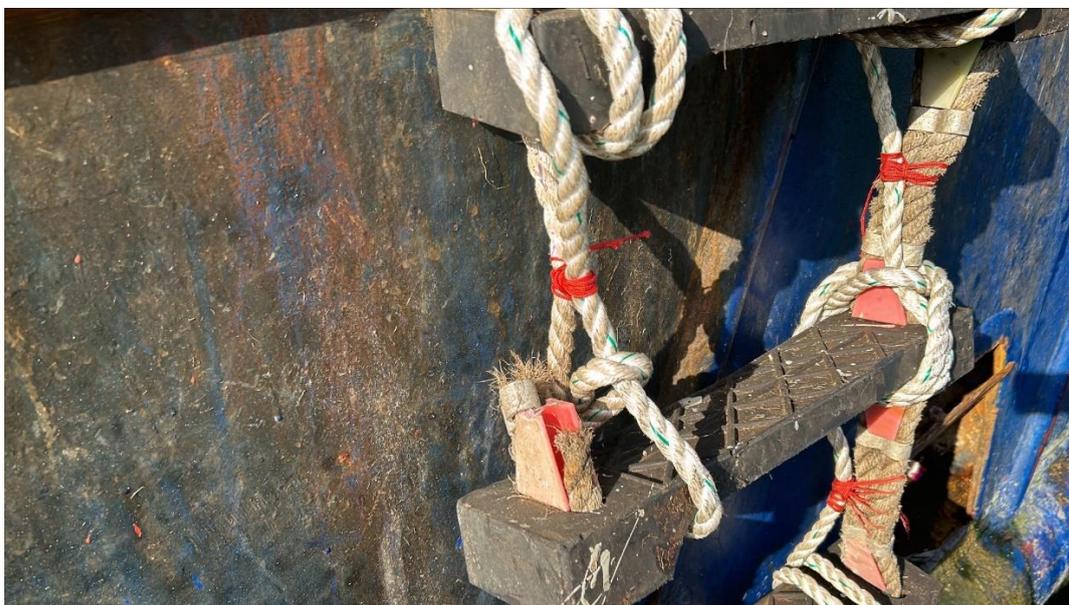


Figure 1. Defective pilot ladder.

Importance of Proper Maintenance and Familiarisation

Recent reports and Port State Control (PSC) inspections have highlighted recurring issues related to deficiency code 10101* i.e. Pilot ladders and hoist/pilot transfer arrangements, the improper rigging of pilot transfer arrangements.

In 2020, there were 197 deficiencies, and 1 detention related to pilot transfer arrangements. By 2024, these numbers had risen sharply to 523 deficiencies and 12 detentions. This significant increase is a cause for concern and underscores the urgent need for ship's crew and operators to take prompt corrective action.

Despite previous safety bulletins addressing concerns such as the use of D-shackles for securing the pilot ladders, several other issues continue to persist. These include:

- Failure to properly secure pilot ladders and accommodation ladders to the ship's side
- Inadequate securing of stanchions with locking pins
- General complacency regarding ladder maintenance
- Lack of clear identification and differentiation between pilot ladders and other types of ladders

These repeated issues suggest a need for improved crew training and awareness regarding pilot ladders and pilot transfer arrangements.

Separately, a Focused Inspection Campaign (FIC) was also carried out by the Tokyo MOU member Authorities in February 2025 on Pilot Ladders / Pilot Transfer Arrangements. During the campaign period, a total of 2,357 inspections were conducted. Three ships were detained and 176 deficiencies related to the FIC were identified on 169 ships.

* [Deficiency Codes - Tokyo MOU](#)

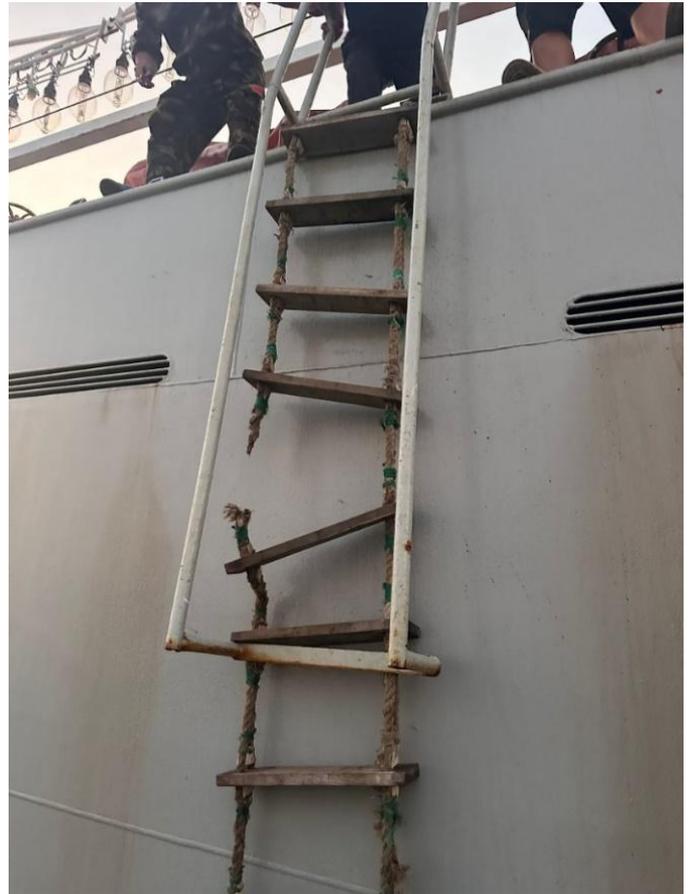


Figure 2. Pilot ladder side ropes parted.

Regulatory Requirements

The requirements for pilot transfer arrangements are outlined in **SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 23** and supporting standards, including:

- **IMO MSC.1/Circ.1331** – Guidelines for pilot transfer arrangements
- **IMO RES. A.1045(27)** – Recommendation on pilot transfer arrangements
- **ISO 799-1:2019** – Standard for pilot ladder construction and specifications

According to **SOLAS V/23.3.3.1**, a pilot ladder must be used when a pilot is required to climb between 1.5 to 9.0 metres. The regulation mandates specific design, construction, and certification standards for pilot ladders.

Relevant references are provided in **Annex I**.

Crew Training, Familiarisation and Responsibilities

Pilot ladders are uniquely constructed in accordance with SOLAS/ISO standards and include features such as spreaders for safety. It is essential that all crew members:

- Understand how to identify pilot ladders from other types of ladders
- Are familiar with proper rigging procedures in line with SOLAS and IMO/ISO guidelines
- Conduct regular checks and maintenance to ensure equipment integrity
- Remain vigilant and proactive to avoid complacency in safety-critical tasks

The ISM company should ensure that risks, control measures, safety procedures, training and maintenance provisions of pilot ladder and pilot ladder transfer arrangement are documented in their Safety Management System, and Planned Maintenance System and effectively implemented consistently across the fleet.

Flag States and/or the Recognised Organisations should ensure that during surveys and inspections, pilot transfer arrangements are surveyed/inspected, which includes ensuring crew are sufficiently familiar with the rigging the pilot transfer arrangement.

Required Pilot Transfer Arrangement Poster (IMPA) – **Annex II (a)**. Pictorial representation of the required boarding arrangements for pilot in accordance with SOLAS Regulation V/23 & IMO Res. A. 1045(27) – **Annex III**.



Figure 3. The pilot ladder secured to railings which is non-compliant, amongst others.



Figure 4. Incorrect ladder used, no spreaders, and combination arrangement not provided for safe embarkation to the vessel despite freeboard of vessel more than 9 m.

Recommended Actions: Ensuring Safe Pilot Transfer Arrangements

To enhance safety and prevent accidents related to pilot transfer, shipowners, operators, master and crew of vessels are strongly advised to take the following steps:

- 1. Conduct Physical Checks**
Verify the current method of securing pilot ladders to ensure there are no rigging errors or lapses in safety.
- 2. Perform Regular Maintenance and Training**
Carry out routine maintenance of pilot ladders and conduct regular crew training on proper rigging procedures.
- 3. Seek Guidance When in Doubt**
If there is any uncertainty regarding compliance or procedures, consult the Flag Administration, Recognised Organisations (ROs), or your company for clarification and direction.
- 4. Prioritise Safe Rigging Practices**
Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the ship owners, operators, Masters & crew to ensure that the pilot transfer arrangement is rigged safely and securely for the safety of all users.
- 5. Replace unfit / damaged pilot ladders**
Damaged or otherwise unsafe pilot ladders must not be used, be taken out of service immediately and replaced with a new ladder meeting the requirements of SOLAS Ch V, Regulation 23.

Future amendments

The 110th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 110) adopted amendments to SOLAS Regulation V/23 and the associated new Performance Standards to improve pilot transfer safety. The new performance standard will enter into force on 1 January 2028.

Pilot transfer arrangements installed before 1 January 2028 on ships to which SOLAS chapter I applies shall comply with the requirements not later than the first survey* on or after 1 January 2029.

*Refer to *Unified interpretation of the term "first survey" referred to in SOLAS regulations (MSC.1/Circ.1290)*.

For the purpose of the present regulation, the expression installed on or after 1 January 2028 means a contractual delivery date for the pilot transfer arrangement or, in the absence of a contractual delivery date, the actual delivery date of the arrangement to the ship on or after 1 January 2028.

Future required Pilot Transfer Arrangement Poster (IMPA) – **Annex II (b)**.



Annex I: REFERENCES

Mandatory Requirements

- a) Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Chapter V-23 on Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- b) Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Chapter II-1/3-9 on Means of embarkation on and disembarkation from ships
- c) ISO 799-1:2019 “Ships and marine technology – pilot ladders”*
- d) ISO 799-1:2019 Ships and marine technology – Pilot ladders – Part 1: Design and specification*
- e) Resolution MSC.572(110) – Amendments to Chapters II-2 and V of the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea.
- f) Resolution MSC.576(110) – Performance standards for Pilot Transfer Arrangements

*A pilot ladder shall be certified by the manufacturer as complying with this regulation (SOLAS Ch V-23) or with an international standard acceptable to the Organization (ISO 799-1)

Guidance / Recommendations / UIs

- a) MSC.1/Circ. 1428 – Pilot Transfer Arrangements – Required boarding arrangements for pilots
- b) IMO Resolution A.1108(29) – Amendments to the Recommendations on Pilot Transfer Arrangements (Resolution A.1045(27))
- c) MSC.1/Circ.1495/Rev.1. – Unified Interpretation of SOLAS Regulation V/23.3.3 on Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- d) IACS UI SC257 – IACS interpretation for Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- e) ISO 799-2: 2021 Ships and marine technology – Pilot ladders – Part 2: Maintenance, use, survey, and inspection.

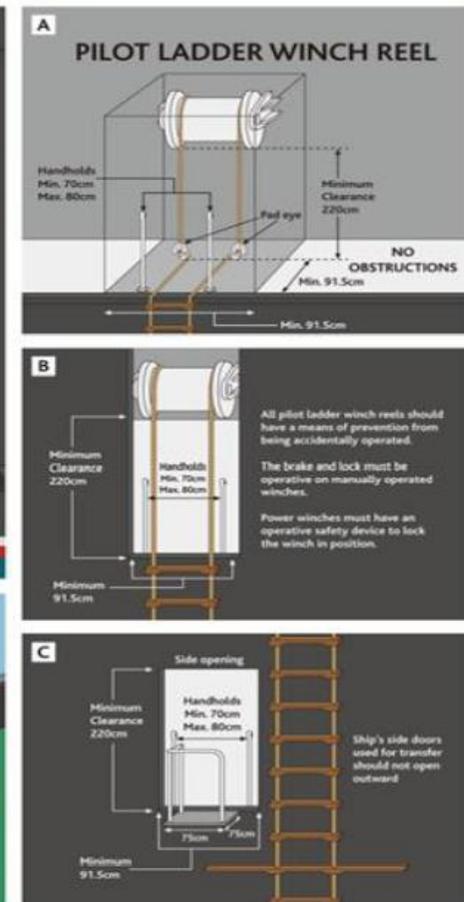
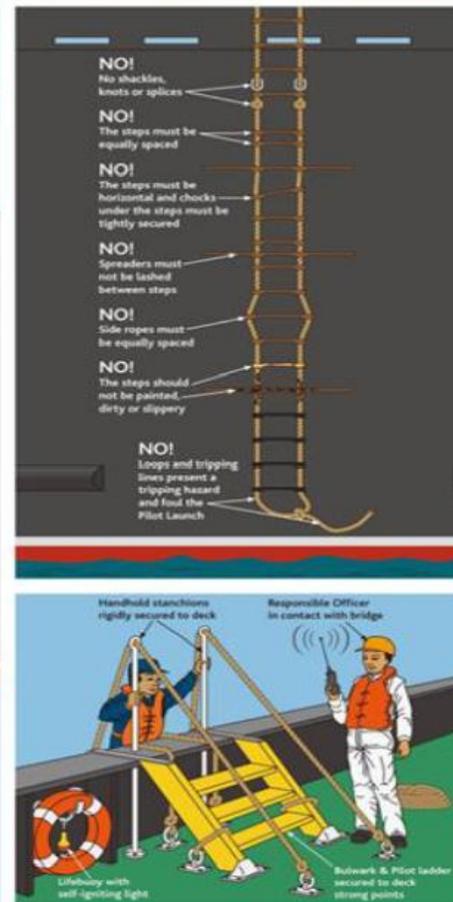
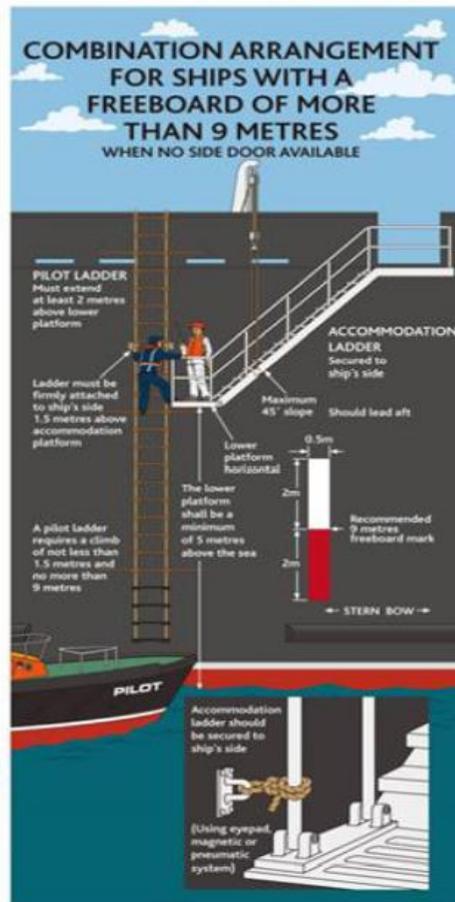
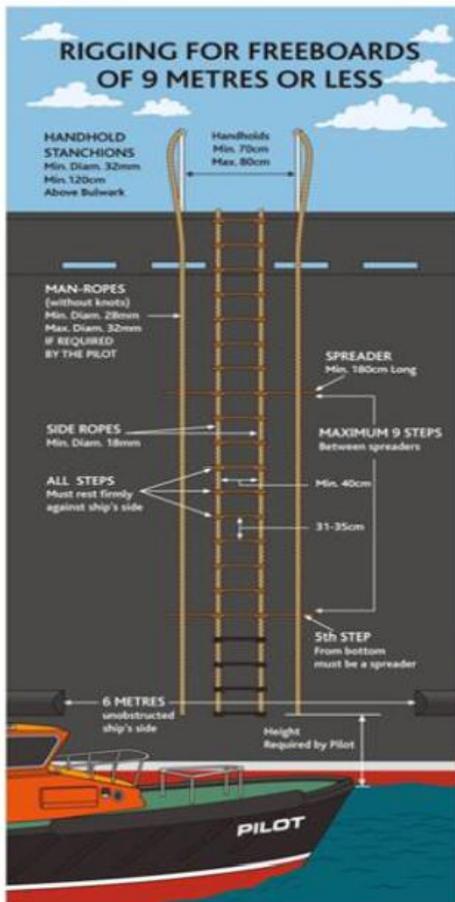
Annex II (a): REQUIRED BOARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PILOTS (INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOT'S ASSOCIATION)

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>





Annex II (b): REQUIRED BOARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PILOTS (INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOT'S ASSOCIATION)*

REQUIRED PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS

In accordance with SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION
Email: office@impahq.org

This document and all IMO Pilot-related documents are available for download at: www.impahq.org

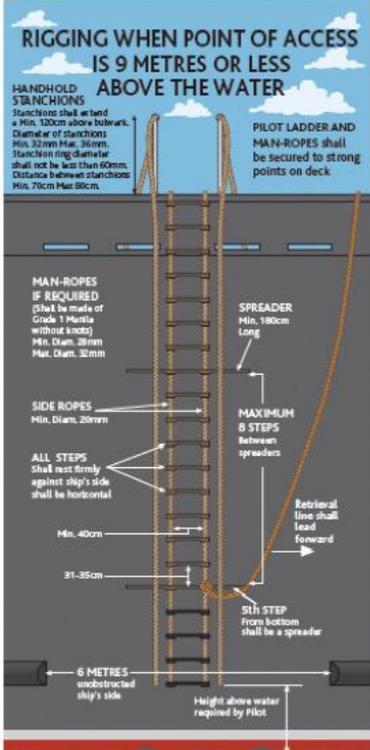


INTERNATIONAL
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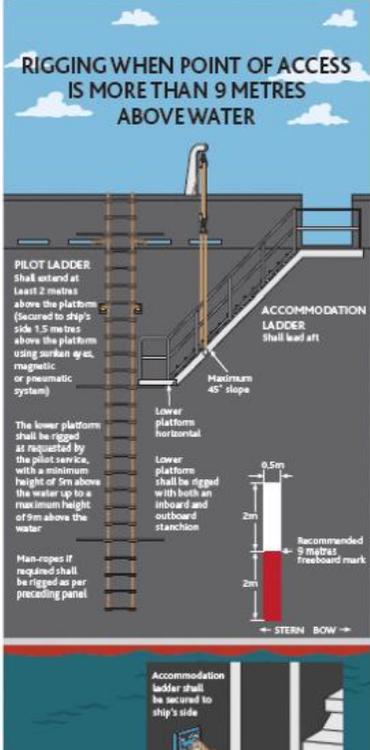
Scan for more
information

RIGGING WHEN POINT OF ACCESS IS 9 METRES OR LESS ABOVE THE WATER



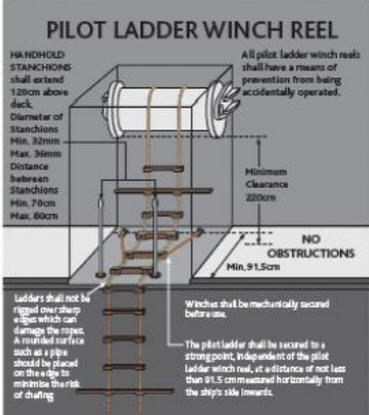
Pilot ladders shall only be secured at intermediate lengths by a device designed by the manufacturer for that purpose, or a rolling hitch. No other method is acceptable.

RIGGING WHEN POINT OF ACCESS IS MORE THAN 9 METRES ABOVE WATER



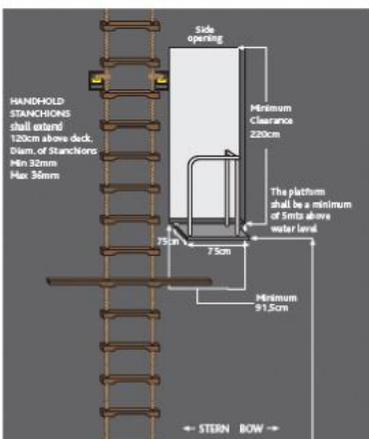
Accommodation ladder shall be secured to ship's side (Using swivel eyes, magnetic or pneumatic system)

PILOT LADDER WINCH REEL



Winches shall be mechanically secured before use.

PILOT LADDER WINCH REEL



The platform shall be a minimum of 5m above water level

Duties of the Responsible Officer

- 1 Have knowledge of the correct use of Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- 2 Establish direct communication with bridge
- 3 Communicate with bridge during boarding process
- 4 Oversee / Check compliant rigging of the ladder
- 5 Test safety equipment in place and ready for use
- 6 Arrange for the pilot to be safely guided to/from the bridge via a clear illuminated route

All Companies shall have an approved safety management system which includes ship-specific procedures for the safe conduct of pilot transfers. The ISM Code requires that these procedures comply with SOLAS Chapter V regulation 23 and conform to IMO recommendations, international standards and guidance from marine industry organizations.

PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAP DOOR AND SIDE DOOR DIAGRAMS CAN BE VIEWED BY SCANNING THE ABOVE QR CODE.

*Maritime Safety Committee approved the amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 and the necessary mandatory performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements will entry into force on 1 January 2028. For more information on the poster visit the website: <https://impahq.org/required-pilot-transfer-arrangements>

Annex III: REQUIRED BOARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PILOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOLAS REGULATION V/23 & IMO Res. A. 1045(27)

