

safetyfocus

The Confidential Hazardous Incident Reporting Programme – CHIRP – is an independent system for all those involved in the maritime industry to report incidents of concern. CHIRP's Maritime Advisory Board has joined forces with *Safety at Sea* to provide regular insights into topical safety issues.

CHIRP
www.chirp.co.uk

Pilot ladders: familiarity breeds neglect

by CHIRP Maritime Advisory Board

► **Almost all seafarers working within the deck department of a ship, be they officers or ratings, are familiar with the need to embark and disembark a pilot. It is clearly a hazardous, often dangerous but essential operation. Albeit regulations and training, proper respect for the construction, rigging, and supervision of pilot ladders and their use is still lacking and this at times results in incidents, sometimes fatal.**

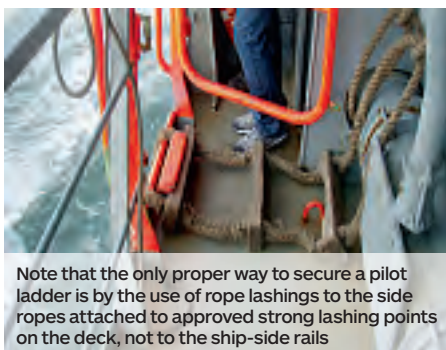
There are a number of commonplace contraventions of the regulations for which there is no excuse and which can result in a ship being justifiably delayed, potentially at great expense, should a pilot refuse, as he/she is entitled to do, to use the ladder if it meets any of the following non-compliant conditions:

- Incorrect construction – eg lower spreader at fifth step missing or spreaders too short
- In poor condition – loose or damaged steps, missing chocks and seizings, etc
- Tripping line fitted to ladder bottom – if necessary at all it should be fitted to the end of the lower spreader
- Insufficient additional safety equipment, eg lifebuoy, heaving line, man-ropes, etc
- Ladder improperly secured, eg steps simply hooked over 'deck tongues' or similar arrangements where the whole load is taken on the seizings and not by the side-ropes;

the photo on the right shows an extremely dangerous practice that is now outlawed by the MCA and banned by classification societies.

When a ladder as shown here is hooked over the plate, then the entire load is being taken on the seizings and not on the ropes. To be properly secured, the guide-ropes must be lashed down to the allocated deck fitting

- Ladder not rigged "within the parallel body length of the ship and, as far as is practicable, within the midship half-length of the ship"



Note that the only proper way to secure a pilot ladder is by the use of rope lashings to the side ropes attached to approved strong lashing points on the deck, not to the ship-side rails

- Climb longer than 9 m from the water to the point of embarkation
- Combination rigs on larger ships where the pilot ladder is not lashed to the accommodation ladder and new/modified/repairs rigs are not attached to the ship's side as required
- No officer supervision on deck (not acceptable from bridge-wing)

Comprehensive advice to naval architects, shipowners, and ship's personnel can be found on the links at the end of this article.

There are of course hazards for crew members when rigging the equipment, especially combination rigs. Crew members

should not work alone on deck in the dark. Lifejackets should be worn if it is necessary to open a ship-side gate or door and must be worn if working overside with combination rigs – including with crotch straps. In addition, safety harnesses and fall arresters should be used by personnel working overside. The use of remotely operable clamping equipment (magnetic/vacuum) to secure the accommodation ladder to the ship's side is often advisable.

It cannot be overstressed how important the proper construction, maintenance, rigging, and supervision of pilot ladders is to ensure the safe and efficient transfer of pilots on to and off a ship and the safety of crew members. Failure to comply with the internationally agreed minimum standards can and does result in injury to and occasionally the death of pilots and crew members. Do you want to bear the guilt for that? ◀

For more info visit
◀ www.impahq.org/admin/resources/guidancefornavalarchitects.pdf +
www.impahq.org/admin/resources/pilottransferarrangementsbrochure.pdf

✉ mail@chirp.co.uk
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► Pilot transfer safety requirements

Requirements for pilot ladders are found under the revised SOLAS Chapter V regulation 23, IMO resolution A 1045(27) and ISO 799 (currently under review). The key points are:

- The ladder "should be certified by the manufacturer as complying with this section or with the requirements of an international standard acceptable to the organisation" (IMO/ISO).
- "The rigging of the pilot transfer arrangements and the embarkation of a pilot shall be supervised by a responsible officer having means of communication with the navigation bridge..."

An IMPA/IMO-approved poster illustrating the requirements in various languages can be found at www.impahq.org/downloads.php

Contact

It is generally accepted that for every accident there are numerous near misses. Using a centralised and respected scheme such as CHIRP (www.chirp.co.uk), observations can be sent to reports@chirp.co.uk. These confidential reports are released to a wider audience, with anonymity retained throughout. Through this process, seafarers can initiate change and improve safety standards and design.