

**Local Notice to Mariners****Number 05 of 2025****01/01/2025****Port of Southampton – Pilot Boarding and Disembarking Vessels – Non-compliant and Defective Pilot Ladders**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that some ships have a pilot transfer arrangement consisting of an accommodation ladder / pilot ladder combination with a trapdoor that does not meet IMO standards in effect since at least 2012. Southampton Pilots have been reminded that they may refuse to use a pilot transfer arrangement that they reasonably believe is unsafe, particularly the offending trapdoor arrangement. All vessels with a trapdoor arrangement are urged to bring their arrangements into compliance with the current IMO standards as soon as possible in order to avoid potential disruptions to ship schedules and port operations.

The relevant documents are SOLAS V Regulation 23, IMO Resolution A. 1045 (27) and guidance from Embarkation & Disembarkation of Pilots Code of Safe Practice.

Fig 1: Non-compliant Arrangement

The arrangement at figure 1 is non-compliant because:



**Figure 1 - Non-Compliant Arrangement**

1. The pilot ladder is not rigged to extend through the trapdoor and secured 1½ metres above the bottom platform (SOLAS 3.3.2.1). The method of securing the ladder to the underside of the platform shown in the figure is dangerous because the transition from the pilot ladder is done via an uneven step height.
2. The horizontal cross member to which the pilot ladder is secured is a distraction from using the side ropes when transitioning onto the pilot ladder when disembarking.
3. The pilot ladder steps cannot rest firmly against the ship's side, due to the nylon wheels attached on the inboard side of the bottom platform.
4. The 'sloping ladder' is not securely attached to the hull.

Figure 2: Compliant Arrangement

Guidance is available in "Shipping Industry Guidance on Pilot Transfer Arrangements, Ensuring Compliance with SOLAS" to be found at [www.ics-shipping.org](http://www.ics-shipping.org).

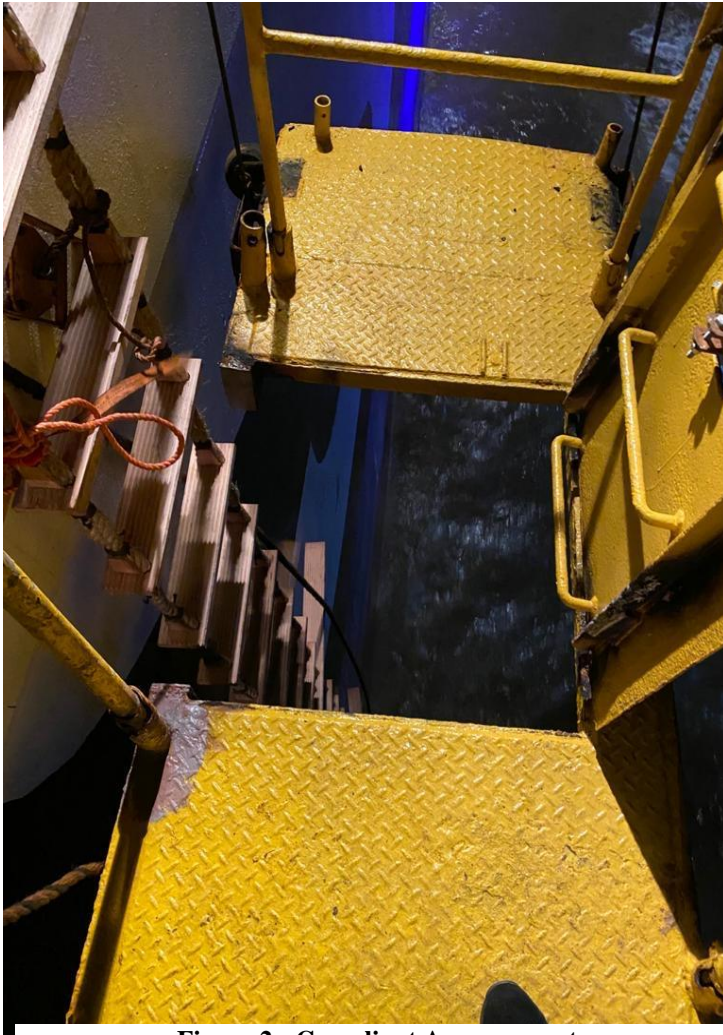


Figure 2 - Compliant Arrangement

Several incidents have recently been reported of vessels presenting themselves with unsafe pilot boarding arrangements which do not meet the requirements set out in SOLAS V regulation 23 and IMO Resolution A.1045 (27).

It is the responsibility of each person involved in the activity of pilot transfers including ship owners, masters and crew, pilots and pilot boat crew as well as the CHA to ensure safe practices.

Vessels with non-compliant pilot boarding arrangements will be refused boarding and will be instructed to rectify the non-conformity, go to anchor or will be refused entry into the port. This can cause lengthy delays and may incur addition charges.

The Harbour Master and Associated British Ports give their full support to pilots refusing to board non-compliant vessels.

Defective and non-compliant arrangements reported by pilots are shared with the MAIB, the local MCA office and the United Kingdom Pilotage Association.

Port State Control inspections will be carried out in some cases and the focus points are:

1. Stanchions must be in place
2. Pilot ladder rope to be in good repair
3. Pilot ladders must not be secured using deck tongues
4. Pilot ladders must not be secured from the deckhead
5. Pilot ladders must not be secured from, or over hand rails
6. Winnets or chocks should not be loose or slack
7. Steps to be in good repair, neither painted nor varnished
8. The rigging of the pilot ladder must be checked, and the embarkation and/or disembarkation of the pilot must be supervised by a responsible officer
9. A tripping line when used shall fitted to the bottom of the ladder, and must be rigged in accordance with IMO Resolution A.1045(27) 2.1.5
10. The pilot embarkation point on the deck must be free from obstructions and adequately lit
11. All ladders must be constructed and rigged as per SOLAS regulations

Pilots are encouraged to deliver the ABP pilot safety poster onboard (Figure 3).

**Steven Masters,  
Harbour Master**

## Local Notice to Mariners

ABP KEEPING BRITAIN TRADING

### Pilot Boarding Arrangement Requirements – Best Practice

Vessels are expected to meet the requirements of the regulations as laid out in SOLAS Chapter 5 Regulation 23 and IMO Resolution A.1045 (27).

Failure to provide compliant boarding arrangements may result in your ship being delayed or having pilotage cancelled with associated cost implications.

#### Securing Pilot Ladders

Side ropes **should not be** secured to the deck by shackles. As weight comes onto the ladder the shackles are likely to jam against the steps.



Side ropes **should be** secured to deck stanchions via rope stoppers which are lashed to the side ropes using a 'rolling hitch' which leads so that the lashing seizes when weight is applied to the ladder.

Pilot Ladders **should not be** secured around handrails which are not designed to be load bearing or certified for that use.



Pilot Ladder **should be** secured at deck level to a strong post.



#### Winch Reel arrangements

The Pilot Ladder which rest **should not be** wired open to support the pilot ladder when the pilot ladder is in use.

The Pilot Ladder **should be** secured to a strong point, independent of the winch reel.



#### Mechanical Securing of Pilot Ladder Winch Reel

A mechanical device or locking pin **should be** utilized to lock powered winch reels to prevent the winch reel from being accidentally operated as a result of mechanical failure or human error.



#### Trap Door Arrangements

The pilot ladder **should extend** above the lower platform to the height of the handrail and remain in alignment with and against the ship's side.



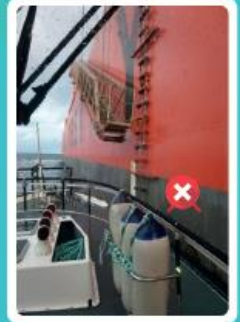
#### Access to Deck

Means **should be** provided to ensure safe, convenient, and unobstructed passage for any person embarking on or disembarking from, the ship.



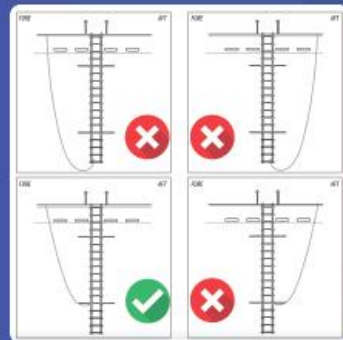
#### Accommodation Ladders and Combination Arrangements

The lower platform of the accommodation ladder **should be** in a horizontal position and secured to the ship's side when in use. The lower platform should be a minimum of 8m above sea level.



#### Retrieval Lines

Retrieval lines can be dangerous to both pilots and pilot launches. Retrieval lines pose a trip hazard when climbing and if strung too low may foul the launch. The line **should be** attached above the last spreader and lead forward.



#### Deck Tongues

Deck Tongues **should not be** used to secure a Pilot Ladder. Suspending pilot ladders from deck tongues or hooks imposes loads on the ladders which they are not normally designed to withstand.

There is also a risk of pilot ladders which are secured in this way becoming detached from deck tongues or hooks when in use.



#### Transfer Arrangements

Each step **should** rest firmly on the ship's side.



Issues with defective or non-compliant pilot boarding arrangements is a topic which the UK port marine and pilotage industry, including the below organisations, have been working hard to highlight. We hope you will be able to use this poster to raise awareness and compliant onboard education and training.



Our thanks and appreciation to Sullom Voe Harbour Authority and Kevin Vallance from the UK Maritime Pilots Association for permission to use some of the imagery in this poster.

Figure 3 - ABP Pilot Boarding Arrangement Requirements - Best Practice