



THE MERSEY DOCKS & HARBOUR COMPANY

## NOTICE TO MARINERS

NO. 16 – 2008

### PORT OF LIVERPOOL

#### PILOT LADDERS

Masters, Owners and Agents are requested to consider the following guidance produced by the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA) in collaboration with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Shipping Federation (ISF).

#### **General**

Pilots come aboard ship to assist the crew during the most critical and potentially hazardous phases of a voyage.

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.

Most regrettably, in recent years, several 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.

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 a diagram that can be downloaded at [www.impahq.org](http://www.impahq.org) (on the home page, click on 'Downloads'). It is also reproduced in the ICS Bridge Procedures Guide.

There is a further detailed technical specification for pilot ladders in IMO Resolution A.889(21). 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 side-ropes or a lack of proper attachment of the ladder to the vessel.

Seafarers should always check the condition of the ladder before it is rigged and also ensure it is secure to the ship. Whilst this is done, seafarers should always take care of their own safety, wearing a life jacket (and a life-line if appropriate).

### **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.

### **Summary**

Pilots have the right to decline to board vessels offering defective ladders, which can result in serious delay. Pilots are also required to report defects in boarding ladders to port state control authorities (MCA), which could lead to a full Port State Control 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.

**CAPTAIN S.F. GALLIMORE  
HARBOUR MASTER**

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