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)

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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
  - Max. 80cm
  - Above Bulwark

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

- **Spreaders**
  - Min. 180cm Long
  - Max. 40cm

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

COMBINATION ARRANGEMENT FOR SHIPS WITH A FREEBOARD OF MORE THAN 9 METRES WHEN NO SIDE DOOR AVAILABLE

- **Pilot Ladder Winch Reel**
  - Minimum Clearance 220cm
  - Min. 91.5cm

- **Accommodation Ladder**
  - Secured to ship’s side

- **Lower Platform**
  - Horizontal

- **Recommended 9-point freeboard mark**

- **Handhold Stanchions**
  - Rigged to deck

- **Accommodation ladder should be secured to ship’s side**

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

- **Minimum Clearance**
  - 220cm

- **Minimum Height**
  - 91.5cm

- **Side opening**
  - Min. 70cm
  - Max. 80cm

- **Ship’s side doors**
  - Used for transfer

  - Not open outward

- **Handhold stanchions**
  - Rigidly secured to deck

- **Lifebuoy with self-igniting light**

- **Bulwark & Pilot ladder**
  - Secured to deck strong points

- **Responsible Officer in contact with bridge**

- **Handhold stanchions**
  - Rigidly secured to deck

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

NO!
- No shackles, knots or splices
- The steps must be equally spaced
- The steps must be horizontal and chocks under the steps must be tightly secured
- Spreader must not be lashed between steps
- Side rope must be equally spaced
- The steps should not be painted, dirty or slippery
- Loops and tripping lines present a tripping hazard and foul the Pilot Launch

NO!
- All pilot ladder winch reels should have a means of prevention from being accidentally operated.
- The brake and lock must be operable on manually operated winches.
- Power winches must have an operative safety device to lock the winch in position.

NOTE:
- No obstructions
- No shackle, knots or splices
- No loops and tripping lines
- No! Spreaders may not be lashed between steps
- Side rope must be equally spaced
- The steps should not be painted, dirty or slippery
- Loops and tripping lines present a tripping hazard and foul the Pilot Launch

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DISCLAIMER

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