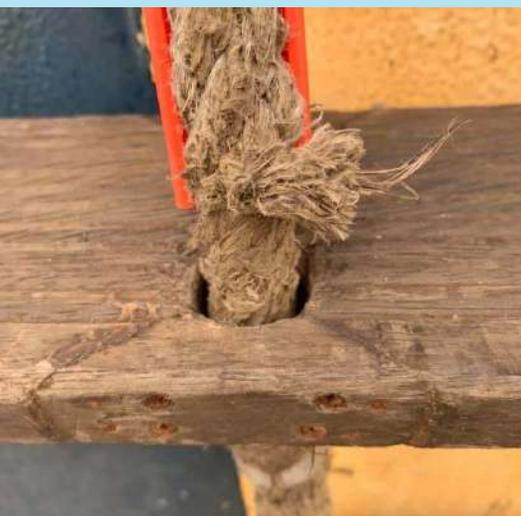




Pilot Ladder Safety

Part 1: Poor pilot ladder condition

Your safety as well as the safety of your fellow crew mates is every crewperson's responsibility. The same responsibilities apply to those visiting your vessel, including marine pilots. There has been a tragic increase in marine pilot fatalities in recent months and pilots around the globe are paying particular attention to the conditions of pilot ladders of the vessels they board. Many have refused to board vessels where ladders are in poor working condition. The American Club has reached out to the marine pilot community regarding some of the main concerns they have with pilot ladder arrangements.



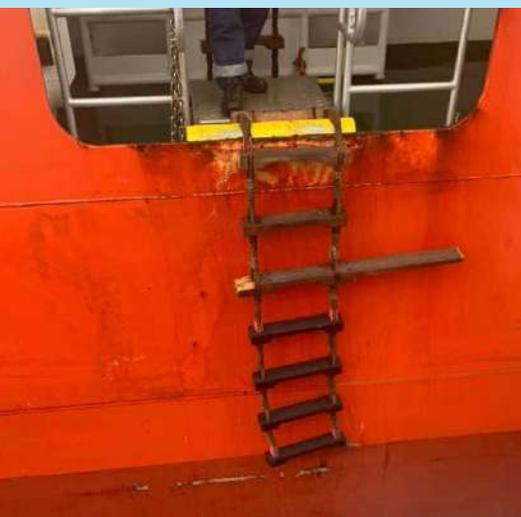
Worn and frayed side rope at pilot step.



Frayed and broken man-rope.



A broken side rope. Periodic visual inspection are imperative.



Exposure of pilot ladders to sea conditions and regular handling of the equipment lead to broken wooden spreaders.



These pilot steps have seen many feet cross them and should be replaced.



This is not exactly what a pilot is happy to see if they come to board your vessel.

SOLAS regulation V/23, *Pilot Transfer Arrangements*, set forth the standards and requirements for boarding arrangements, responsibility of ship's personnel in rigging pilot transfer equipment, associated pilot transfer equipment, clear access and lighting.

Before every use, and before every rigging of a pilot ladder, attention is to be paid by the responsible officer to the overall condition of the pilot ladder. Due to the work pressure on ship's crews, the condition of the pilot ladder can be overlooked and loose or missing chocks, dirty ropes and steps, even damaged steps are found in some cases.

Keeping a watchful eye out for pilot ladders that may be in poor condition is everyone's responsibility. Keep that watchful eye on your vessel and avoid conditions seen in these photos captured by safety conscious pilots around the globe.

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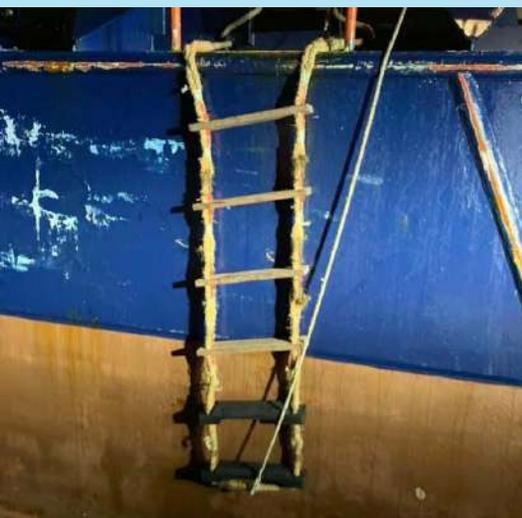
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GOOD CATCH from **The American Club**

Pilot Ladder Safety Part 2: Retrieval lines

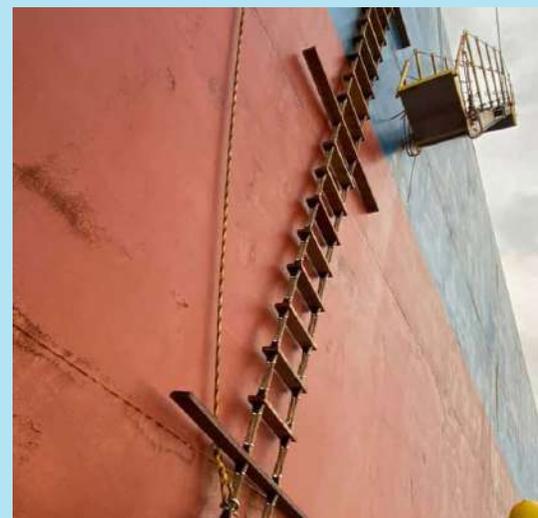
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This ladder is not classified as a pilot ladder, since it has no spreaders and four rubber steps. The retrieval line is in the way of the steps.



A pilot ladder in excellent condition, but the location of the retrieval line on this long pilot ladder does not seem fixed for ease of retrieval by the crew.



Although this retrieval line seems not be in a position that would increase risk of entanglement, it has been affixed at least two meters above where it should have been affixed.



This slack retrieval line could be a source of trouble for a pilot in heavier seas.

SOLAS regulation V/23, *Pilot Transfer Arrangements*, set forth the standards and requirements for boarding arrangements, responsibility of ship's personnel in rigging pilot transfer equipment, associated pilot transfer equipment, clear access and lighting.

To rig a pilot ladder is hard physical work for the vessel's crew. The longer the pilot ladder in length, the more difficult it can be to retrieve once it has been deployed, and retrieval lines are regularly used.

International Maritime Organization Assembly Resolution A.1045(27), Recommendations on Pilot Transfer Arrangements, paragraph 2.1.5 recommends that when a retrieval line is considered necessary to ensure the safe rigging of a pilot ladder, the line should be fastened at or above the last spreader step and should lead forward. The retrieval line should not hinder the pilot nor obstruct the safe approach of the pilot boat.

The reason for this is very simple: A retrieval line suspended under the bottom spreader can easily get caught in the fenders or bollards of the pilot boat, or the pilot's leg can get entangled in it. Ensure the retrieval line is correctly rigged every time as the pilot's safety is dependent upon it.

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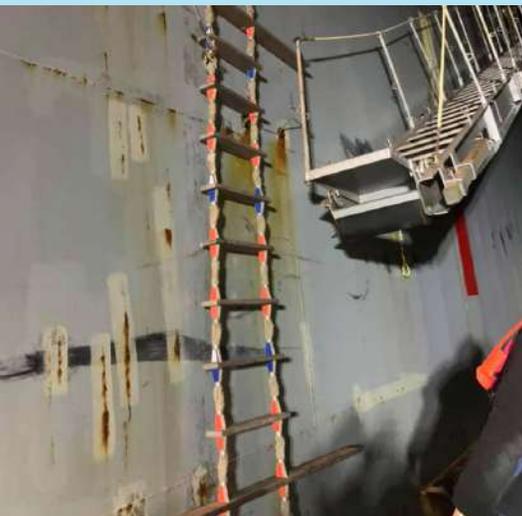


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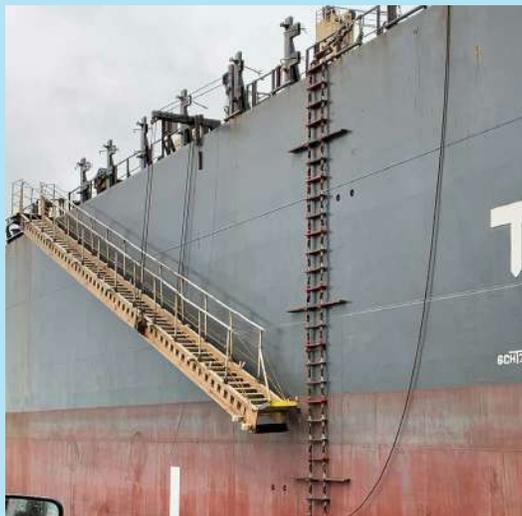
Pilot Ladder Safety

Part 3: Combination ladder arrangements

Your safety as well as the safety of your fellow crew mates is every crewperson's responsibility. The same responsibilities apply to those visiting your vessel, including marine pilots. There has been a tragic increase in marine pilot fatalities in recent months and pilots around the globe are paying particular attention to the conditions of pilot ladders of the vessels they board. Many have refused to board vessels where ladders are in poor working condition. The American Club has reached out to the marine pilot community regarding some of the main concerns they have with pilot ladder arrangements.



The lower platform of the accommodation ladder is less than 16 feet (5 meters) above the waterline.



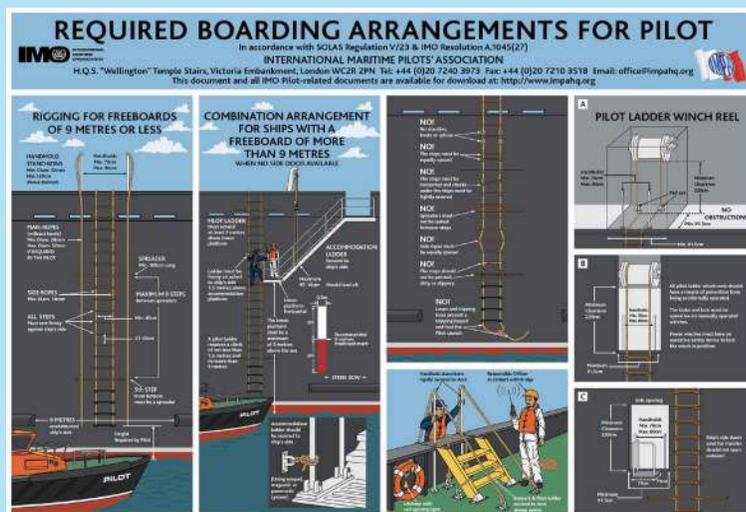
The pilot ladder has not been secured to the ship's side.



Pilot ladder is to be secured to the ship, not the accommodation ladder.



Accommodation ladder's lower platform is not horizontal with waterline.



International Maritime Organization/International Maritime Pilots' Association poster, *Required Boarding Arrangements for Pilots*.

SOLAS regulation V/23, *Pilot Transfer Arrangements*, set forth the standards and requirements for boarding arrangements, responsibility of ship's personnel in rigging pilot transfer equipment, associated pilot transfer equipment, clear access and lighting.

When the vertical freeboard to the water level is more than 30 feet (9 meters), a combination ladder arrangement, consisting of a pilot ladder and an accommodation ladder at the same time, is normally used. The reason for this is that a fall from more than 30 feet (9 meters) into the water is considered mortal. There are many things to keep in mind when rigging a combination ladder, all of which can be found on the International Maritime Organization/ International Maritime Pilots' Association poster, [Required Boarding Arrangements for Pilots](#).

Most deficiencies noted are:

- a. the platform is less than 16 feet (5 meters) over the water;
- b. the platform is not horizontal;
- c. the pilot ladder is not secured to the vessel's side at 5 feet (1.5 meters) above the platform;
- d. the accommodation ladder is not secured to the vessel's side; and
- e. the inner stanchion of the combination ladder is missing.

Members are also reminded of our [Alert of March 9, 2020, American Pilots' Association Request—Dangerous Trapdoors](#) that addresses concerns among pilots regarding trap door platforms due to the multitude of potential non-compliances intrinsic to such arrangements.

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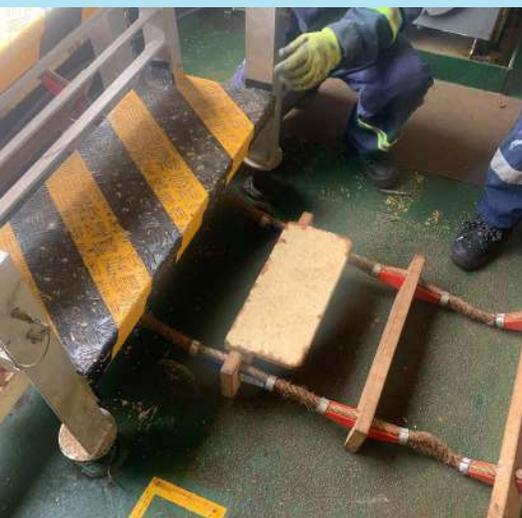


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Pilot Ladder Safety

Part 4: Securing pilot ladders at intermediate length

Your safety as well as the safety of your fellow crew mates is every crewperson's responsibility. The same responsibilities apply to those visiting your vessel, including marine pilots. There has been a tragic increase in marine pilot fatalities in recent months and pilots around the globe are paying particular attention to the conditions of pilot ladders of the vessels they board. Many have refused to board vessels where ladders are in poor working condition. The American Club has reached out to the marine pilot community regarding some of the main concerns they have with pilot ladder arrangements.



Affixing a deck tongue over a pilot ladder should be avoided as they are not designed to carry the load of the ladder.



Pilot ladders should never be affixed to non-designated securing points such as seen here.



Steel shackles used to secure pilot ladder side ropes should also be avoided as they are not reliable to handle the weight and will damage the chocks.



The use of steel bars to secure pilot ladders should also be avoided as they are strung through side ropes the can damage the ropes that are not designed to carry such loads at such points.

SOLAS regulation V/23, *Pilot Transfer Arrangements*, set forth the standards and requirements for boarding arrangements, responsibility of ship's personnel in rigging pilot transfer equipment, associated pilot transfer equipment, clear access and lighting.

While there are plenty of regulations and guidance regarding the safe use of pilot ladder arrangements, none of them provide adequate guidance to secure pilot ladders of intermediate lengths.

To ensure that the pilot ladder is not damaged, no excessive weight should be put on the steps and spreaders as they are not designed to carry such loads. The weight of the ladder should be transferred to fixed strong points on deck by means of the pilot ladder's side ropes. It is recommended to use a rolling hitch knot using ropes of sufficient strength. The use of D shackles and deck tongues can damage pilot ladder's steps. Using steel bars should also be avoided. The use of pilot ladder chocks to secure the pilot ladder should also be avoided.

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Pilot Ladder Safety Part 5: The cutting edge

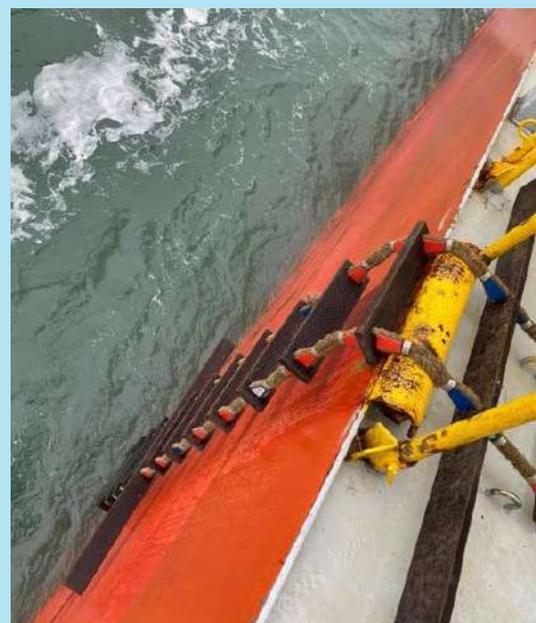
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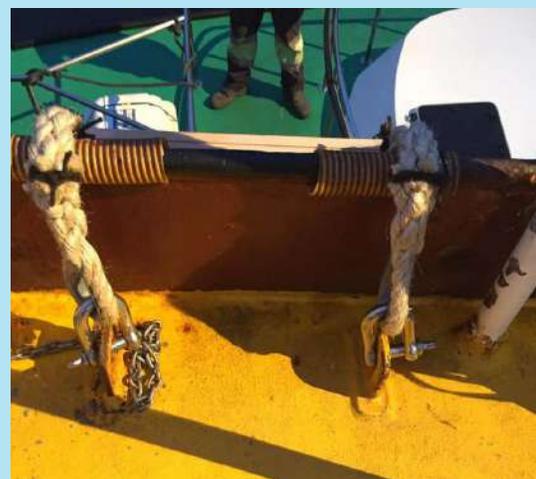
Pilot ladder over the side across a sharp edge.



Wear and tear on the pilot ladder rope will occur at a faster rate if no sharp edge protection is in place.



Well designed pilot station with a section of cut steel pipe affixed to ensure pilot ladder goes over a rounded edge.



SOLAS regulation V/23, *Pilot Transfer Arrangements*, set forth the standards and requirements for boarding arrangements, responsibility of ship's personnel in rigging pilot transfer equipment, associated pilot transfer equipment, clear access and lighting.

“Failure by design” is an element of pilot ladder safety that is often beyond the vessel crew's control. A common example of this is the presence of sharp deck edges in and around the pilot's boarding station. It is imperative that crews remain vigilant and watchful of pilot ropes and other parts of the pilot ladder that can be damaged by sharp deck edges where pilot ladders go over the vessel's side. Such events can be injurious or fatal to the pilot or personnel on a pilot boat. A simple way to avoid this is to weld a round pipe over any sharp edges to safeguard the ladder against such damage. This will also avoid excessive wear to the ladder.

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