



Marine Notice 20/2012

Pilot Transfer Arrangements

Purpose

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to draw the attention of shipowners, operators, masters, pilot providers and pilots to amendments to SOLAS Chapter V/23 Requirements for pilot transfer arrangements; and IMO Resolution A.1045(27) which provides additional recommendations regarding pilot transfer arrangements.

Background

The changes to SOLAS Chapter V/23 include:

- requiring pilot ladders to be certified by the manufacturer;
- securing the lower platform of accommodation ladders;
- recognising combination arrangements;
- banning mechanical pilot hoists; and
- enhancing the standards for manropes.

In particular, when a combination arrangement is used for pilot access, means shall be provided to secure the pilot ladder and man-ropes to the ship's side at a point of nominally 1.5 metres above the bottom platform of the accommodation ladder. In the case of a combination arrangement using an accommodation ladder with a trapdoor in the bottom platform (i.e. embarkation platform), the pilot ladder and man-ropes shall be rigged through the trapdoor extending above the platform to the height of the handrail.

IMO Resolution A.1045(27) makes recommendations regarding pilot transfer arrangements including:

- identifying standard spacing for pilot ladder steps;
- addressing safe use of retrieval lines for pilot ladders;
- Identifying permanent marking of pilot ladders;
- Improving standards for the side ropes of pilot ladders;

- improving standards for accommodation ladders used in conjunction with pilot ladders;
- addressing combination arrangements;
- confirming the banning of mechanical pilot hoists;
- improving standard of access to a vessel's deck;
- adding information on the safe approach of pilot boats; and
- addressing installation of pilot ladder winch reels.

The amendments to SOLAS in IMO Resolution MSC.308(88) came into effect from 1 July 2012 and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority has revised Marine Order 21 to implement the SOLAS V/23 amendments. IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ.1428 provides a revised poster which incorporates the most significant changes.

Maritime authorities in Australia support both the Australasian Marine Pilots Institute and the International Marine Pilots Association in implementing SOLAS based objectives for ensuring a safe and secure means for pilots to board and disembark from vessels.

AMSA recommends that all Australian pilots, where possible, visually inspect the pilot transfer arrangements before using any equipment provided. Where boarding or disembarking arrangements do not comply fully with the requirements, the pilot should require the vessel to make changes, noting that delays may result from the need to change an improperly rigged, inadequately maintained or poorly positioned pilot ladder.

Masters and watchkeepers are also reminded that they should confirm with the pilotage provider the exact requirements for rigging the ladder before the vessel arrives at the agreed

pilot boarding place. This should include the position of the pilot ladder and the height above the water.

Strict attention should be paid to the freeboard of the vessel to determine whether a combination ladder needs to be rigged and, if a combination ladder is required, to securing such ladders to the vessel.

In all cases, ladders must be rigged clear of sponsons and other obstructions on the vessel's side that might present a hazard to the pilot vessel when alongside.

Masters and watchkeepers should also comply so far as possible with requests from pilots as to the course and speed required to provide a safe lee for boarding or disembarking vessels.

Summary

The responsibility for safe pilot transfer practices rests jointly with each of the vessel's owners, operators, master and crew, pilotage providers, pilots and pilot boat crew. All these parties should observe both the spirit and intent of the regulations, to ensure safety is not compromised. AMSA urges all parties to acknowledge the risks associated with transfer operations and adopt and follow recognised international industry standards and practices.

Mick Kinley
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
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Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181
CANBERRA ACT 2601
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