

Notice No. MSN 15 (2025)**Date: 05.11.2025**

Photo for illustrative purposes

Background

Pilot transfer is a safety-critical operation requiring strict compliance with internationally recognised standards. Inspections by flag states, port authorities, and maritime organisations, along with incident reports, continue to highlight recurring deficiencies in ladder rigging, securing methods, and maintenance practices that compromise pilot safety.

Common issues include:

- Insecure ladders.
- Uncertified or worn components.
- Inadequate maintenance.
- Insufficient crew knowledge of correct procedures.
- Incorrectly rigged ladders and combinations
- Ladders not rigged on the flat side of the vessel

In response, the IMO and IMPA have reinforced global safety requirements through amendments to **SOLAS Regulation V/23** and revisions to **ISO 799**. RAK Ports adopts these international standards proactively and upholds them through operational oversight within its jurisdiction. The Harbour Master retains authority to intervene where safety is at risk, and pilots are authorised to refuse non-compliant arrangements.

Purpose

This notice serves as a reminder of the safety risks associated with improper rigging, securing, and maintenance of pilot transfer arrangements, and defines the mandatory standards that RAK Ports upholds through operational oversight within its jurisdiction. It highlights:

- Compliance with IMO, ISO and IMPA standards.
- Masters' and crew responsibilities for safe rigging, readiness and documentation.
- Use of certified equipment and appropriate personal protective gear.

Applicability

This notice applies to:

- All vessels calling at RAK Ports and under pilotage.
- Shipowners, operators, Masters and crew involved in pilot transfer operations.
- Marine Pilots at RAK Ports.

Compliance Requirements

All pilot transfer arrangements must meet the following criteria:

- Pilot ladders and manropes must not exceed 36 months from the date of manufacture.
- All equipment must be type-approved by a recognised authority; self-certification is not accepted.
- Manufacturers must operate under a certified quality management system.
- Trapdoor arrangements must comply with ISO 799 Part 3.
- Securing components must have a minimum breaking load of 48 kilonewtons.
- Intermediate securing must use a type-approved device or a 3-metre rope tail with a rolling hitch.
- Side ropes must be 20 to 22 millimetres in diameter, mildew-resistant and constructed with suitable core materials.
- Spreaders must be installed at intervals of every 8 steps, with the fifth step from the bottom being a spreader.
- Adequate lighting must be provided at the transfer point during night operations.
- Mechanical hoists are prohibited.
- Combination ladders must extend at least 2 metres below the accommodation ladder platform and be secured to the ship's side.
- Pilot ladders must be clearly marked and easily distinguishable from other ladders.

Responsibilities of Masters and Crew

- Inspect pilot ladders before and after use.
- Replace ladders showing signs of wear, damage or corrosion.
- Remove ladders with damaged steps or spreaders from service; repairs are not permitted.
- Maintain inspection records onboard and present them upon request.
- Carry spare ladders and manropes.
- Ensure crew are trained in rigging procedures, emergency response and pilot recovery.
- Supervise rigging under a designated responsible officer in communication with the bridge.
- Confirm ladder type, boarding side, freeboard and pilot boarding speed with the pilot station prior to boarding.
- Record pilot ladder and manrope details in the vessel's Safety Management System and Record of Equipment.

Pilots

- Visually inspect transfer arrangements prior to boarding.
- Remain vigilant and are authorised to refuse boarding if arrangements are unsafe or non-compliant.
- Report unsafe arrangements to the Harbour Master.

Protective Equipment

All personnel involved in pilot transfer operations must wear:

- SOLAS-approved lifejackets.
- Safety helmets.
- Non-slip footwear.
- High-visibility clothing.

PPE must be inspected before use and worn correctly throughout the operation. Pilots must not board unless PPE requirements are fully met.

Non-Compliance

May result in:

- Refusal of pilot boarding.
- Reporting to the Harbour Master.
- Operational delays or enforcement action.

Enforcement

The Harbour Master may:

- Refuse pilot boarding or deny vessel entry if arrangements are found to be unsafe, non-compliant or improperly rigged.
- Request Port State Control inspection.
- Detain vessels at anchorage until deficiencies are rectified.

Where deficiencies are identified:

- Inward clearance may be denied until rectification is confirmed.
- Repeated violations may result in formal warnings, operational delays or administrative penalties.

Unsafe arrangements must be:

- Refused by pilots and reported to the Harbour Master.
- Documented with photographs and incident details.
- If unresolved, escalated to the flag administration by the Harbour Master.

Reference – Diagram and Guidance

- **UKMPA Interactive Poster:** SOLAS V/23-aligned illustrations of correct and incorrect ladder setups - <https://ukmpa.org/public-documents/interactive-pilot-transfer-arrangements>
- **Marine-Pilots.com:** Article featuring the UKMPA poster.

Visual aids should be used during crew training and pre-arrival briefings to ensure compliance.

Regulatory References

- SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23 (2025 Amendments).
- IMO Resolution A.1045(27) – Adopted by 27th IMO Assembly (2011).
- IMO Resolution A.1108(29) – Adopted by the 29th IMO Assembly (2015).
- MSC.1/Circ.1428 Rev.1 – Revised by IMO Maritime Safety Committee in 2025.
- ISO 799 Series (Parts 1–3): Covers ladder design, inspection, and securing gear.
- IMPA Safety Campaign Reports.

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