

Notice No. MSN 16 (2025)**Date: 13.11.2025**

SAFE ACCESS VIA GANGWAYS & ACCOMMODATION LADDERS

To

- Vessel Masters
- Ship Owners
- Ship Operators
- Shipping Agents
- Marine Tenants
- Berth Operators
- Marine Pilots

Image courtesy: Lloyd's Register, from <https://www.lr.org/en/knowledge/class-news/21-25/>.

Background

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has issued revised guidelines for ships' gangways and accommodation ladders (MSC.1/Circ.1331/Rev.1), effective July 2026. These updates introduce clearer definitions, enhanced safety practices, and new requirements for both shipboard and shore-based access arrangements.

At RAK Ports, these standards will apply across all terminals and berths, with tenants and terminal operators expected to align shore-based gangways accordingly. Unsafe arrangements will be refused and reported to the Harbour Master.

Scope and Applicability

This notice applies to:

- All vessels calling at RAK Ports.
- Shipowners, operators, masters, and crew involved in embarkation/disembarkation.
- Tenants and terminal operators providing shore-based gangways.

Key Safety Requirements

- Crew must wear lifejackets and harnesses when rigging gangways, accommodation ladders, and safety nets.
- Side nets may be fixed along both sides of platforms as an alternative to hanging nets.
- Ensure adequate lighting and a lifebuoy with self-igniting light and buoyant lifeline are provided.
- Position gangways clear of areas where suspended loads may pass overhead.
- Do not secure gangways to guardrails unless designed for that purpose; fence any gaps.
- Provide direct access between ladder head and deck via a guarded platform.
- Supplementary access to the bottom platform may be added if needed.
- Gangways: maximum 30° from horizontal; accommodation ladders: maximum 55°, unless designed otherwise.
- Alternative means must provide equivalent safety.
- Subject to annual inspection and five-yearly survey

Responsibilities

Shipowners, operators, and masters:

- Ensure all access equipment complies with IMO standards.
- Maintain, operate, and inspect equipment as per guidelines, and keep inspection and survey records.
- Train crew in safe rigging and use.

Tenants and terminal operators (shore-based gangways):

- Ensure shore gangways meet or exceed IMO standards.
- Maintain and operate equipment accordingly.

Non-Compliance

- Non-compliance may result in refusal of boarding, operational delays, or administrative penalties.
- Unsafe arrangements must be refused and reported to the Harbour Master.

References

- IMO MSC.1/Circ.1331/Rev.1 (2025)
- Lloyd's Register Class News 21-25 ([Revised IMO guidelines - embarkation & disembarkation | LR](#))

Capt. Michael Magee

Group Harbour Master, RAK Ports