



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Safety Alert 04-22

VERIFY GATEWAY HANDHOLD ARRANGEMENTS

Incorrect Terminations Can Lead to Marine Casualties

This Safety Alert addresses the importance of verifying the correct arrangement of handholds in embarkation gate arrangements aboard merchant vessels.

The Coast Guard is currently investigating a casualty involving a fall from a pilot ladder where the handholds in the gate arrangement aboard the vessel terminated without being rigidly secured to the vessel's structure. This termination left a gap in the handholds at the transition point at the head of the pilot ladder, where an embarking person might reach to pull themselves onto the vessel (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Handholds that terminate above the vessel structure.



Figure 2: Gap in handholds appear to accommodate spreader.

SOLAS 2004 (Consolidated) is clarified by IMO Resolution A.1045 (27) to indicate that each handhold in a gateway arrangement should be rigidly secured to the ship's structure at or near its base (Figure 3).

The Coast Guard observed that the abrupt termination of the handholds above the vessel structure appeared to be a modification that was completed to accommodate the length of the pilot ladder spreader during deployment and retrieval of the pilot ladder. The modification made it possible to retrieve the pilot ladder without having to lift the spreader up and over the vessel's railings (Figure 2).

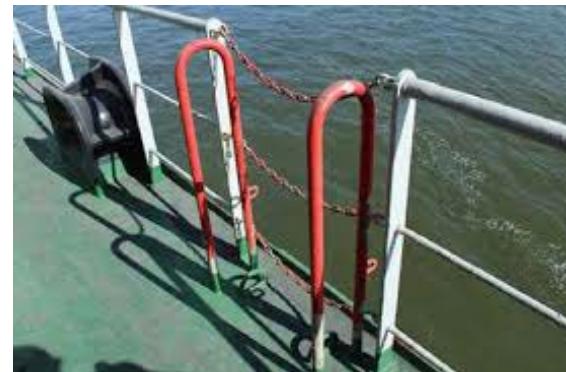


Figure 3: Handholds rigidly secured to the vessel structure at their base.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that flag state administrations, classification societies, port state control inspectors, and shipboard personnel:

- Ensure familiarity with applicable requirements pertaining to handholds in gateway embarkation arrangements aboard merchant vessels.
- Visually examine handholds in gateway embarkation arrangements for gaps, specifically at the lower terminations.
- Initiate rectification and issue outstanding conditions to meet regulatory intent for any non-conformities discovered.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) recently published a series of standards aimed at improving pilot ladder safety. These standards supplement existing IMO recommendations and requirements for pilot ladders. Vessel owners and operators, shipboard personnel, and system designers are highly encouraged to review and comply with these standards.

- ISO 799-1:2019 Ships and marine technology — Pilot ladders — Part 1: Design and specification
- ISO 799-2: 2021 Ships and marine technology — Pilot ladders — Part 2: Maintenance, use, survey, and inspection
- ISO 799-3:2022 Ships and marine technology — Pilot ladders — Part 3: Attachments and associated equipment

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Please note other related available information here:

1. International Maritime Organization (IMO) Resolution A. 1045(27) titled, “Pilot Transfer Arrangements”. The link for this document can be found [here](#).
2. USCG Safety Alert 14-18 titled, “Don’t Forget about Gangways and Ladders! Pilot Dies in Gangway Accident” posted on the DCO site [here](#).
3. International Maritime Organization (IMO)/International Maritime Pilots Association’s “Required Boarding Arrangements for Pilot” poster (found on IMPA’s website [here](#) and also enclosed on page 3).

International Maritime Organization (IMO)/International Maritime Pilots Association's
“Required Boarding Arrangements for Pilot” poster

