UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

February 9, 2023
Washington, DC

Safety Alert 04-22-CH1

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).

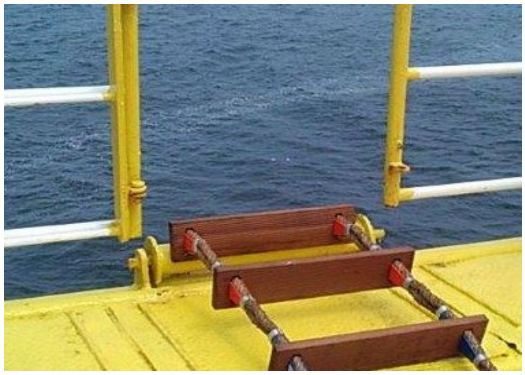

Figure 1: Handholds that terminate above the vessel structure.

Figure 2: Gap in handholds appear to accommodate spreader.

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).

SOLAS 2020 (Consolidated) is clarified by IMO Resolution A.1045 (27), as amended by Resolution A.1108 (29), 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).

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

This Safety Alert is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. Developed by the Coast Guard Sector New York Investigations Division, and distributed by the Office of Investigations and Analysis. Please address questions to HQS-SMB-CG-INV@uscg.mil.

Please note other related available information here:

1. International Maritime Organization (IMO) Resolution A. 1045(27) and Resolution A. 1108 (29) titled, “Pilot Transfer Arrangements”. The links for these documents are A 1045 27 (imo.org) and A 1108 29 (imo.org).

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