

SAFETY BULLETIN No.5 of 2020

PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS THAT USE NON-APPROVED METHODS TO SECURE PILOT LADDERS

The Port of London Authority continues to receive a large number of reports for pilot ladder securing methods which do not meet UK Regulations. **Reports from pilots indicate that vessels are improperly securing their pilot ladders to the ship using shackles.**

Shackles are a common pilot ladder securing deficiency. The following IMO resolution states:

IMO A.1045(27): 2.1.1 *“the securing strong points, **shackles**, and securing ropes should be at least as strong as the side ropes”*

It must be noted that although the IMO allow the use of shackles, UK Authorities have declared the use of them as **non-compliant**. Ladders constructed in compliance with the standards established by SOLAS V/23 and Res.A.1045 (27) will secure their treads in position using mechanical clamping devices (referred to as widgets), seized in place immediately above and below each tread.

When a pilot puts weight on a ladder, the ladder will move freely under shackles until the next chocks and step have reached the shackles. Using D-shackles to choke pilot ladder side ropes can damage these widgets and also destroy their seizing. When the seizing is destroyed, or the widget is damaged, this can lead to the adjacent tread becoming loose



Image showing stress caused on chocks and steps

Taking the weight of a ladder onto the widgets causes the widget seizing to become damaged. This leads to the steps no longer being held firmly in the horizontal position. This in turn means that the steps can become free to rotate underfoot as the pilots climb the ladder

To avoid delays in port, when securing a pilot ladder in place it is imperative that it is secured in such a way that the ladder cannot slip and that the weight of the ladder (and the pilot on the ladder) is transferred directly through the side ropes to the ships structure.



Secured to a strong point and around the side ropes.
The recommended knot is a "Rolling Hitch"

To raise awareness and to highlight the potential risk of using improperly rigged pilot ladders we ask that all master's and senior officer should physically check the current method of securing their vessel's pilot ladders to ensure that crews are not making this common rigging mistake.

For advice and guidance on the correct rigging of pilot ladders in UK waters please refer to:

SOLAS regulation V/23

IMO Resolution A.1045(27)

Code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers (COSWP) 2019

Pilot Ladder Manual (Advanced Edition) published by Witherby Publishing Group (ISBN 978-1-85609-757-4)

5 June 2020

Port of London Authority
London River House, Royal Pier Road,
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

BOB BAKER
CHIEF HARBOUR MASTER



Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in the VTS Centres at Gravesend and Woolwich

