

Bulletin

CCS Australian Office, No. 104, 2026 Issue 003

Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin Regarding AMSA Maritime Safety Bulletin 23 Pilot transfer arrangements

1. Background

Pilot transfer operations are critical high-risk shipboard operations. In recent years, accidents and casualties caused by pilot ladder failures, improper arrangements, and insufficient communication have continued to occur worldwide. Deficiencies related to pilot transfer arrangements remain relatively common and have become one of the focused inspection items.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and Australian port authorities have repeatedly issued notices emphasizing that relevant responsible parties must ensure that pilot transfer arrangements remain continuously safe and compliant.

Based on the recent Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin issued by AMSA regarding Pilot Transfer Arrangements (Issue 23 of March 2026), together with previous relevant safety bulletins issued by port authorities and CCS, this bulletin provides a summary and consolidation.

2. Applicable Regulations and Standards

Pilot transfer arrangements shall comply with the following regulations and standards:

i. International Conventions and Standards

- SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23
- IMO Resolution A.1045(27) and A.1108(29)
- MSC.1/Circ.1428 and MSC.1/Circ.1495/Rev.1
- ISO 799-1:2019

ii. Australian Requirements

- Marine Order 21 (Safety and emergency arrangements)
- Marine Order 54 (Coastal pilotage)
- AMSA Marine Notice 2023/04

iii. Latest Developments

IMO has adopted amendments to SOLAS V/23 and new performance standards (MSC.572(110), MSC.576(110)), which will enter into force on 1 January 2028, further

strengthening the design, installation, inspection, and maintenance requirements for pilot transfer arrangements.

3. PSC Deficiency Cases

According to accident cases and PSC inspection findings, common problems include:

i. Poor Equipment Condition

- Side ropes worn, aged, contaminated, or insufficient in strength
- Pilot ladders not complying with ISO standards or without valid certificates
- Damage caused by corrosion of end metal fittings
- Steel fixing screws embedded within the step fixtures (chocks) were observed to have chafed against the side ropes

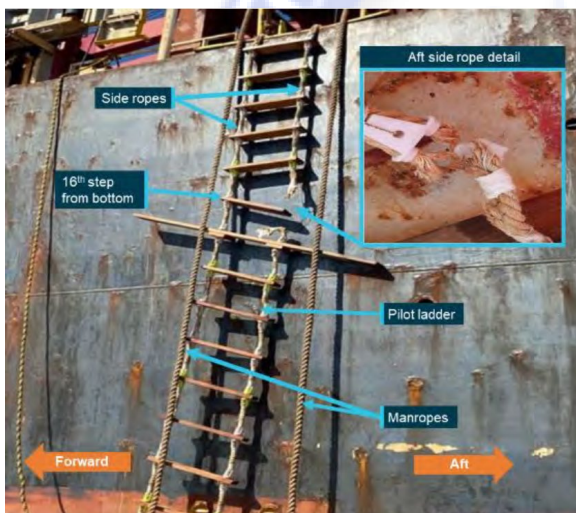


Figure 1 Failed pilot ladder



Figure 2 Example of corroded end point thimbles (protective rings)

ii. Non-compliant Arrangements

- Incorrect arrangement of combination ladders
- Pilot ladder not extended to the required length above the platform
- Unsafe embarkation/disembarkation point arrangements
- Splices found in the side ropes of pilot ladders, which are non-compliant

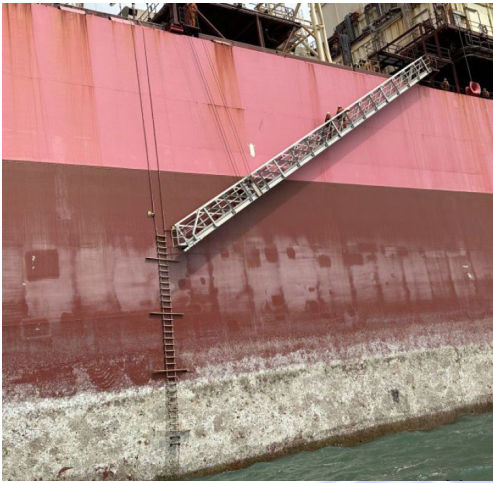


Figure 3 Example of non-compliant combination pilot ladder arrangements



Figure 4 Side ropes with splices (connections)

iii. Incorrect Securing Methods (Frequent Issue)

- Shackles used to directly bear the load of side ropes
- Load borne by steps or spreaders
- Failure to transfer load to strong points on deck

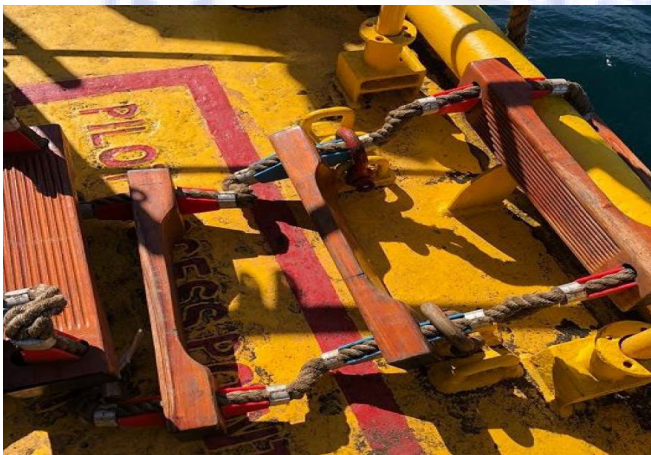


Figure 5 Shackles used to directly bear the load of side ropes

iv. Insufficient Operation and Communication

- Insufficient communication between the vessel and pilot/launch boat
- No unified work plan or unclear division of responsibilities
- No evidence of documented risk assessment for pilot transfer arrangements was found in the vessel's safety management system.

4. Safety Requirements and Precautions

i. Pilot Ladder Requirements

- Manufacturer's certificate must be provided and comply with SOLAS V/23 or ISO 799-1:2019 standards
- Regular inspections shall be carried out and the ladder maintained in good condition
- Side rope splices, uneven steps, slipping hazards, or non-compliant structures shall not be present

ii. Securing and Fixing Requirements

- Pilot ladders shall be secured to strong points on deck
- Load shall be transferred through the side ropes and shall not be borne by steps or spreaders
- Use of rolling hitch knots for securing is recommended (AMSA Marine Notice 2023/04)
- Use of shackles or steel fittings to directly bear side rope loads is prohibited

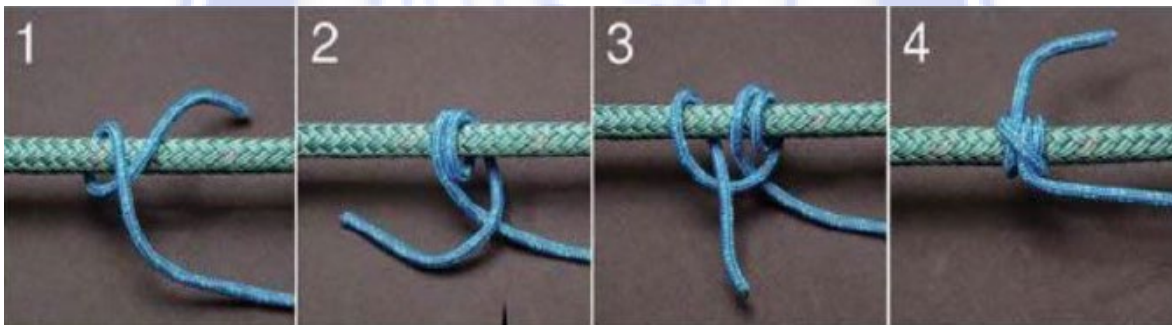


Figure 6 Rolling Hitch



Figure 7 Pilot ladder secured to approved main deck strong points using rolling hitch knots.

iii. Combination Ladder Requirements

- Pilot ladder shall extend at least 2 metres above the platform
- Both accommodation ladder and pilot ladder shall be firmly secured
- Safe transition for personnel shall be ensured

iv. Additional Safety Measures

- Handhold stanchions complying with requirements shall be provided
- Man ropes shall be provided as required
- Lifebuoy with light shall be provided at the embarkation area
- Adequate lighting shall be ensured

v. Inspection and Maintenance

- A regular inspection regime shall be established under the ISM system
- Equipment exposure to ultraviolet radiation, chemicals, and other adverse environments shall be prevented
- Pilot ladders and man ropes shall be periodically replaced (according to AMSA Marine Notice 23/04 and ISO requirements, pilot ladders complying with ISO 799-1:2019 shall undergo and pass strength testing within 30 months, or otherwise be directly replaced; additionally, PORT OF PORT HEDLAND LOCAL MARINE NOTICE 14/23 (P) contains corresponding requirements)
- Man rope specifications: diameter 28–32 mm, made of Grade One Manila rope (PORT OF PORT HEDLAND LOCAL MARINE NOTICE 14/23 (P))

vi. Operations and Communication

- Full communication with the pilot launch shall be carried out before pilot transfer
- Operational procedures and division of responsibilities shall be clearly defined
- Smooth communication throughout the entire process shall be ensured

5. Responsibilities and Compliance Requirements

Pilot transfer safety involves the following parties:

- Shipowner / Management Company
- Master and crew
- Pilot and pilot launch

The Master bears the ultimate responsibility for providing safe transfer conditions.

If the arrangement does not comply with requirements, the pilot has the right to refuse boarding, and consequences such as PSC detention may result.

6. Responsibilities and Compliance Requirements

Compliance of pilot transfer arrangements depends not only on meeting standard requirements, but also on proper use, maintenance, and risk control. All relevant parties shall attach great importance to ensuring that arrangements remain safe and operational at all times.

References and Attachments

1. Marine Safety Awareness Bulletin issue 23 – Pilot transfer arrangements
2. AMSA Marine Notice 2023/04
3. PORT OF PORT HEDLAND LOCAL MARINE NOTICE 14/23 (P)
4. Bulletin from CCS Australian Office No.087 - Pilot Transfer Arrangement - Based on AMSA Marine Notice 23/04

CCS Australia Office
08 May 2026

Announcement:

1. Intention is to assist and ensure owners to understand and well prepared, ensuring all updated requirements from AMSA can be met
2. For more information, please visit AMSA website at www.amsa.gov.au and CCS website at www.ccs.org.cn
3. The information contained does not and cannot supersede any AMSA or related governing parties requirements as well