A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fellow Pilots,

Discussions on technology and human error are always interesting. Undoubtedly, technological developments greatly contribute to safety in various sectors, including transportation. Pilots understand this and, across the world, have not only been early adopters of innovations, but often are the driving force behind the development and introduction of value-adding hi-tech tools such as Portable Pilot Units (PPUs).

I meet many pilot groups in their own pilotage districts and witness firsthand how ingenious they can be in finding ways to integrate technological developments into their practices, thereby doing more for shipping while safeguarding the public interest through the highest levels of safe navigation. I have every reason to believe this constructive attitude towards technology will continue for a long time to come.

I get a little worked up, however, when the discussion remains unidimensional. One argument typically put forward, often by technology vendors, goes along the lines of “humans are error-prone, most accidents are the result of human errors, and this new technology will eliminate the risk”. Recently, we have heard this argument in the context of the discussion on Marine Autonomous Surface Ships.

Leaving aside the fact proponents of the argument do not seem to appreciate its natural extension borders the absurd by implying the best way to eliminate human error is to get rid of humans, the argument also conveniently overlooks that people are involved in commissioning, designing, installing, maintaining and monitoring systems, in addition to operating them, thereby squarely shifting the possibility of error from on-board operators to developers and remote operators.

It also overlooks the many situations where human intervention actually saves the day. In what concerns marine pilotage, I am not aware of any system – except the trained human brain – that can yet factor in, in real-time, and even more importantly anticipate, the myriad complexities pilots face in their assignments such as the joint and cumulative effects of factors such as winds, currents, tides, under keel and channel dynamics on the massive moving masses that are modern commercial ships.

I am encouraged, however, by the fact most senior policy-makers and industry executives I meet understand this and that, by and large, common sense ends up prevailing. In the end, I think maintaining the highest levels of safety depends on all parties truly working together and approaching questions like this in a comprehensive manner.

In closing, as you know, IMPA is holding its next biennial Congress in Cancún next May. The excellent work done to date by the host committee needs to be underlined and the event promises to be a great success. The comradeship of pilots is legendary, and I hope to see many of you there, to share valuable ideas and points of view about our profession and the marine sector!

Simon Pelletier
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Message from the Secretary General

Dear Colleagues,

I write this a few days before our first IMO meeting of 2020, NCSR 7, and we are preparing for a number of Pilot related matters to come up.

Helping Inform our position will be members opinions and experiences which have been expressed at some regional fora, like the LAPF in Montevideo and the African Congress in Tangier. A lot of members are concerned about Engine Power and responsiveness, or rather, the lack of it. The industry is pushing on with measures to ameliorate our carbon footprint without thought to the consequences, and as the shipowners told us in December, “it won’t get better”! As I write this, we are on the 2nd day of 0.5% sulphur for Marine use, so the impact of that measure is hard to judge yet.

Seawater exhaust scrubbers are coming under renewed scrutiny too.

What is IMPA doing then about these developments? We have met the shipowners already and found unexpected common ground. We may collaborate on better practices, such as use of software over rides under Pilotage. The shipowners also recognise the inevitability of greater use of Tugs (and the irony that this could increase pollution in Ports.)

IMPA & ICS may also join in approaching the class societies over the direction some of the technical developments are going, with Astern power seemingly a fraction of what IMO specifies. 2020 is going to be very interesting!

The office also continues work on preparation for Cancun in May this year. We know our hosts will provide a memorable event, so its up to the office to provide matching content and speakers. We will make sure this happens.

Seasonal greetings from London

Nick Cutmore
Towards the self-parking ship

Lloyd’s List Viewpoint 25 July 2019 with kind permission of LL and the author, Michael Grey.

We are told that in addition to the compulsive summer viewing of Wimbledon and the cricket World Cup final earlier this month, thousands enjoyed the Facebook film of the unfortunate contest between the port bow flare of the container ship Soul of Luck and the ship loading crane in the Javanese port of Semarang. It was, as all these crane strikes are, an unequal contest, the ship winning by a knockout, leaving the crane a tangled mass of expensive wreckage, fit only for the scrapyard. The sound effects were terrific, although I would have welcomed sub-titles in order to comprehend the urgent shouts of the bystanders.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=54&v=ktFMv08xAI

There seem to be rather too many of these so-called “allisions” in the confines of ports these days, although if you are in the replacement crane business, life must be good. I used to assiduously watch all of the video footage of ships crashing into quays, knocking down cranes and demolishing shiploaders, colliding with berthed vessels, terrifying folk in Venice as an alternative to frightening diners alongside the Bosporus. But today there is such a wide choice that I have become quite selective in my viewing and tend to be influenced by the critics.

Frankly, you can rage all you like and threaten hapless shipmasters and pilots with criminal sanctions for the destruction of port assets, but it is difficult to know how the situation is going to get any better. The design of ships with great bow (and stern) flares, to facilitate bigger deck loads, is not likely to change. If you shift the crane rails so that the equipment is out of danger, then the crane jibs don’t reach the far side of the ship. The cranes are already so high that in some ports, such as Savannah, there are complaints from the local aviation authorities.

They used to trundle the cranes down the quay out of harm’s way but that means stopping loading in adjacent berths and we can’t have that. All they do is prudently get the drivers out of their cabs until the ship is securely alongside and keep everyone else well clear. They probably also regularly check that their insurance is up to date. The situation isn’t helped by all parties - owners, charterers, terminals and port authorities - yelling at the pilots and ships’ people to hurry up and get ships in and out of port faster; turning caution into a sin and prudence something that will get you marked down on your annual assessment.

There are, I read, exciting things being done by scientists and engineers in the field of “automatic berthing”. Might this take the potential for grief out of ship-handling?

Somehow, I doubt it. I have a friend who disconnected his “self-parking” facility from his posh new car, such was the state of abject terror to which he and his wife were reduced, as the vehicle, with the device engaged, backed with speed and confidence into a space which they were convinced was too small. thing, even though they had paid through the nose for the option on the car’s spec.

There are helpful things that makers of equipment can do to make life easier, such as the provision of decent visual aids, so that those on the bridge know what is going on forward and aft of the container stacks. I saw Doppler docking aids demonstrated once and it was very impressive, and doubtless there are clever satnav driven devices that have taken over that role. But there is still a great deal riding on good spatial awareness, judgement and experience, which is why good pilots are worth their weight in gold, and probably always will be.

You can have all the electronics, clever sensors and automatic aids you like, but you will, from time to time, still be dependent upon somebody who knows what to do when it all goes pear-shaped. Automatic docking software will be as much good as a chocolate teapot, if the engine refuses to go astern, stutters to a stop amid lots of alarms going off, or there are gremlins that have got into the pitch control, a tug wire has snapped or there is a sudden and unanticipated blast of wind from just the wrong direction. These things happen more than many people seem to realise.

Then it is down to what people call the “human element”, with cool, calm and expert people doing exactly the right thing to save the day and a lot of expensive steel repairs. You might also say the same about the so-called virtues of “remote pilotage” about which certain port authorities become regularly over-excited. Some person sitting in a tower several miles from the action won’t be much help when there is cry from the man on the wheel “she’s not answering the helm, pilot!” Especially if the distress is enunciated in a different tongue as everyone, it is said, panics in their own language.

I’m regularly being accused of Luddism, but I just wonder whether all the science and engineering research into automatic docking, autonomy of various kinds and doing away with people, might be better channelled into other, more useful areas. Such as designing a container crane that would be rather more robust, enabling out of control ships to merely bounce off its elastic legs, or shock-absorbing fenders.

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Seafarers working on cruise ships and ferries are among the unhappiest in the industry, according to the Happiness index from the Mission to Seafarers

The Seafarers’ Happiness Index provides all men and women working at sea with an opportunity to let the industry know how they feel about their work.

The report, published every quarter, also acts as a guide to the maritime industry so they can respond to issues that directly impact the happiness and wellbeing of their workforce. The latest Seafarers’ Happiness Index report revealed that seafarers working on cruise ships and ferries are among the unhappiest in the industry. Cruise and ferry crews scored an average of 5.3 out of 10 on their general happiness rating – 15 per cent lower than the global average across all vessel types, which stands at 6.27. Another interesting discovery was the fact that happiness levels are highest among younger crew members and lower ranked seafarers. Cadets scored a staggering 8 out of 10, which is encouraging evidence that the maritime industry continues to offer exciting career opportunities for new recruits.

CONCERNING TRENDS
In the latest study, there were three key issues of concern that emerged. These revolved around delayed payment of wages, shore leave, and worries about workloads caused by reduced crews onboard and a lack of understanding from shore staff. The concept of shore leave and time off is clearly a concern for seafarers, as pressures mount to increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve turn-around times. It was perhaps most neatly summed up by one seafarer who said, “Shore leave is dead.” Many seafarers also expressed a sense of vulnerability regarding abandonment, following an increase in incidents around the globe where ship owners have failed to pay crews and have left them onboard with limited supplies and support.

POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS
The report does highlight positive change, too. Better internet connections at sea and further improvements in both the availability and cost of communications means seafarers can stay in touch with their families more easily. Time and time again, seafarers stated that, “communications with loved ones is essential, even if it is only for a couple of minutes a day”. Seafarers also noted that they were happier about the opportunities to exercise on board. This result is particularly encouraging as the ability to keep fit and healthy clearly has a positive effect on an individual’s broader outlook and specifically on their mental wellbeing.

SHIP TYPE
Seafarers on dredgers were the most satisfied according to the data, however, the percentage of respondents serving on this type of vessel was low – perhaps just a very happy ship! Elsewhere, ferry crews and those on cruise ships were reportedly the least satisfied, with an average of 5.3/10 on their general happiness level. Crews on tankers, bulk carriers and container ships were all surprisingly well clustered around the 6.3 mark, very close to the average happiness level this quarter.

AGE RANGE
The youngest age range proved to be the happiest, with a very high 7.9/10 reported. The score plummeted dramatically amongst 25-35s, down to a very low 5.8/10, but rallied through the next ranges, with those of 55-65 also reporting high levels of general happiness in their work at sea.
Pilots Calendar 2020

A special thanks to Mark Harvey - UK artist and illustrator creator of Pilot Pete character.

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Declaración del Foro de Montevideo 2019

Los prácticos presentes en el X Foro Latinoamericano de Prácticos, representando a las asociaciones miembros de IMPA, reunidos en la ciudad de Montevideo, Uruguay, del 30 de septiembre al 4 de octubre de 2019, luego de concluir las ponencias, tomamos conocimiento de lo siguiente:

1. Las características regulatorias del práctico de los países integrantes del Foro, su comparación, perspectivas y proyección.
2. Se recibe información sobre políticas de defensa del medio ambiente.
3. Se recibe información sobre el tráfico de drogas.
4. Se recibe información sobre el Centro de Capacitación con Buques a Escala de Panamá.
5. Se recibe información sobre el simulador de escala de práctico de Chile.
6. Se recibe información sobre la seguridad del práctico y las iniciativas técnicas del práctico de Brasil.
7. Se recibe información sobre la responsabilidad civil del práctico de parte de los países que participaron como expositores en el panel: Argentina, Brasil, Panamá, Uruguay y USA.

Habiendo debatido y analizado los asuntos que afectan al práctico en la Región, concluimos lo siguiente:

1. Se declara al Foro parte adherente de la doctrina IMPA contraria a la competencia entre prácticos, favorable a la regulación por parte del Estado del número limitado de prácticos por zona para que cada práctico realice la cantidad adecuada de maniobras para mantener la habilidad y experiencia reciente, evitando la falta de maniobras o horas prolongadas de práctico en canales.
2. Se declara el Foro a favor:
   a. Del turno rotativo obligatorio para la asignación de maniobras y práctico, para mantener la actualización de los prácticos y como consecuencia el reparto del fondo común de la recaudación.
   b. Que cada zona de práctico sea propietaria de sus lanchas.
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Captain Alan Leech

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c. De mantener el práctico como un servicio de interés público, en el que la seguridad no debe ser comprometida por la competencia, las presiones comerciales ni las fuerzas del mercado.

3. Reiteramos que la función primordial del práctico es mantener la seguridad en la navegación y la protección de la vida humana, la propiedad y el medio ambiente.

4. Se invita a las asociaciones presentes a completar un informe sobre responsabilidad civil, tratado en el panel de la sesión del viernes 4 de octubre, para ser compartido con el resto de las asociaciones del Foro. Se propone la conformación de un grupo de trabajo que elabore un estudio comparativo sobre la responsabilidad civil del práctico en la Región. El resultado de este estudio será presentado en el Congreso de IMPA en Cancún.

5. El monto máximo de la responsabilidad civil del práctico debe ser limitado.

6. Se propone la realización de un taller sobre seguridad marítima.

7. Se solicita a IMPA que tome las acciones que considere adecuadas para alcanzar los siguientes objetivos:

   a. Que en los buques con máquinas controladas por computadora se incluya la posibilidad de anular el automatismo, de manera que la computadora no sea un obstáculo para la navegación segura del buque. Dicha información debe formar parte del intercambio entre el Capitán del buque y el práctico.

   b. Que se revise la cantidad mínima de escalas de práctico a bordo, y que se mejoren los procedimientos para garantizar su correcta instalación, incluyendo los mecanismos necesarios para fijarla al casco del buque, la inspección efectiva y el mantenimiento adecuado. Que se incluya una certificación que determine su período de vida útil.

   c. Solicitar información de la postura de IMPA sobre buques autónomos y que se propicie que cualquier cambio en reglamentación de la OMI tome en consideración el impacto en el práctico.

   d. Actualizar la información sobre estudios de fatiga, de manera que estén disponibles para las asociaciones afiliadas a IMPA.

8. Propiciar el uso de una aplicación (App) para compartir información sobre deficiencias en buques que navegan en la Región.

9. Establecer un grupo de trabajo para el desarrollo de guías de capacitación para prácticos. En el desarrollo de estas guías se usará como referencia la Resolución A.960 y los deportes de los países latinoamericanos.
10. Designar a Perú para ser la sede del XI Foro Latinoamericano de Prácticos, a celebrarse en el 2021, y Panamá como sede alternativa, en caso de producirse algún inconveniente para la realización del Foro en Perú. Se acuerda otorgar a Perú hasta el Congreso de IMPA de Cancún, en mayo de 2020, para confirmar de manera definitiva la sede del Foro del 2021. De no producirse la confirmación por parte de Perú en la fecha indicada, la sede del Foro del 2021 pasará automáticamente a Panamá.

11. Se resuelve anular la candidatura para la reelección del Capitán Alvaro Moreno (Panamá) como vicepresidente de IMPA en las próximas elecciones que se realizarán en el Congreso de IMPA en Cancún (2020).

Argentina
Brasil
Colombia
Chile
México
Panamá
Perú
Uruguay

[Signatures]
The French pilots from Bordeaux and Gironde estuary, having a spare 55’ pilot boat immediately operational reacted promptly, and shortly after coming to an agreement with the SINES Port Authority and Miguel, decided to send their pilot cutter “RUMBA” over there.

Tristan PAILLARDON and Christian RIOUT, respectively President and Vice-president of the Gironde pilots, plus a crew of two (Coxswain and engineer) sailed at 9h00 on Monday 24th June for an 830 nautical miles passage, with an obligation to stay at a distance of maximum 20 miles from the coastline.

5 refuelling were coordinated and arranged on Sunday, the first one in SANTANDER, then in GIJÓN on June 24th evening, another one in La CORUNA and then in LEIXÕES on the 25th, and finally in CASCAIS on Wednesday.

After 3 days of safe navigation and two overnights in GIJÓN and LEIXÕES, pilot boat “RUMBA” passed SINES jetties around 20h00 on Wednesday 26th and was immediately handed over to our Portuguese colleagues. After a few weeks of tests, Sines port Authority, decided, in agreement with our Portuguese colleagues to finally buy “RUMBA”.

This operation gives us the opportunity to underline the very helpful cooperation that was given to the French team by our Spanish colleagues, especially José-Luis in SANTANDER, Angel and Javier in GIJÓN, who arranged everything needed, and our good colleagues from LA CORUNA who were able to arrange divers to remove a piece of fishing net stuck in the rudder. A very warm thanks to all of them and also to David in LEIXÕES for their help and availability!

Christophe REUX, Secretary General - French Federation of Maritime Pilots, EMPA senior VP - Treasurer.

Cooperation between member associations

On the evening of Thursday June 20th, our fellow pilots from SINES, in Portugal unfortunately lost their 55’ pilot boat that finally sunk after suffering a fire in the engine room. Luckily there were no casualties.

Portuguese pilots’ President, Miguel VIEIRA DE CASTRO, immediately launched a call through the EMPA Board, in search of any pilot boat availability.

IMPA President Simon Pelletier and Secretary General Nick Cutmore meet the leadership of the Uruguayan Pilots Association in Montevideo during the Latin Forum.
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The ghost in the machine – unwanted touchscreen activation

As edited from official TSB (Canada) report M17C0108k.

Staff on an up-bound tanker in a river waterway decided to anchor the vessel just below the lock to wait for traffic ahead to clear. While it was anchoring the vessel lost propulsion. The Master immediately contacted the engine room crew, who requested that propulsion control be transferred to the engine room. This would allow them to attempt to restart the engine. As the engine room crew were working to restart the main engine, the port bow anchor was remotely released from the bridge.

Despite these efforts, the vessel grounded. Although the main engine was soon restarted and propulsion control was transferred back to the bridge, attempts to free the vessel under power were unsuccessful. Two days later the vessel was refloated with the assistance of two tugs and towed to a nearby dock. Subsequent underwater inspection showed there was no apparent damage to the vessel.

The investigation found that the main engine shutdown feature on the touchscreen integrated alarm monitoring and control system had inadvertently been activated. The touchscreen was mounted horizontally in the centre bridge console, close to other controls such as steering and propulsion. At the time of the loss of propulsion, four crew members were within 2m of the touchscreen. Tests showed that the touchscreen was reactive to a variety of inputs – including the telephone cord situated next to it.

When the main engine shutdown button was activated on the touchscreen, a generic and ambiguous system status message appeared on the screen. The message did not specify that the engine was about to shut down, nor did it indicate how the shutdown was activated or from where (bridge, engine room, emergency stop etc).

Another touchscreen ghost

A small split-hull suction dredger was fully loaded and on its way to the dumping ground. The vessel was on autopilot and the duty seaman decided to dust the wheelhouse consoles. The vessel, still making way, was close to the dumping ground but not yet in position when the hull opened unexpectedly and the dredged material was prematurely released.

The investigation found that the ‘virtual button’ on the touchscreen control panel for the emergency open had been activated by the operator while he was dusting the screen. This button was only one level deep in the touchscreen menu control. Two unintended touches with the duster, one to reveal the ‘emergency opening’ button and one to activate it, had opened the vessel.
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Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for recognizing our card.

As many of the delegates know, Captain Dennis Sherwood, a New York pilot, was killed on December 30 from a fall while embarking an inbound container ship. The embarkation in this instance was via a combination arrangement of a pilot ladder and an accommodation ladder. That combination is not unusual. In fact, it is required whenever the distance from the surface of the water to the point of access to the ship is more than nine meters. This particular arrangement, however, involved a trapdoor in the platform of the accommodation ladder with the pilot ladder hanging from a bar near the bottom of the platform and the top step of the pilot ladder significantly below the level of the platform. This requires a pilot to pull himself or herself up through the trapdoor while twisting to get a secure footing on the platform.

This controversial trapdoor arrangement has long been considered unsafe by pilots. It is clearly not in compliance with current SOLAS requirements.

Mr. Chairman, I have considerable personal experience with this arrangement. Hoisting myself up through the trapdoor is extremely difficult – in the best of conditions. To be frank, I hate it. And every pilot whom I have ever heard talk about it hates it too.

Our recent survey of pilot transfer arrangements indicates that despite the inspection requirements imposed in the 2012 revisions of SOLAS V/23 and its accompanying Resolution A.1045, there has been no significant improvement in the enforcement of IMO pilot transfer standards. Captain Sherwood’s death is a tragic reminder that much more needs to be done.

We raise this particular matter today to urge all flag states, port states, and ship operator organizations to join with us to do whatever it takes to get rid of this arrangement, immediately.

Thank you.
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Pilot ladders and the way they are secured

My name is Arie Palmers and I am working as a pilot in the Scheldemonden-(Netherlands) area since 2009. After I got involved in 2 incidents with minor injuries in one week in the spring of 2018, I started wondering whatever might have caused these 2 incidents and therefore I started developing an interest in pilot ladders and the way they are secured.

From that moment on I have been keeping a tally of the non-compliant boarding arrangements I see in front of me on a daily basis, and off course I participate in the annual safety campaign, conducted by IMPA each October. The outcome of the campaign is that about 18-20% of the boarding arrangements are non-compliant in accordance with:

- SOLAS Regulation V/23
- IMO Resolution A.1045(27)

In my own tally the outcome is even more staggering: 47% of the pilot boarding arrangements I have to encounter are non-compliant... That does this difference mean??? That will be work enough ahead for another article... On a daily basis we see numerous different ways a pilot ladder is secured, the vast majority of them non-compliant and therefore dangerous for the user. Insurance companies might even deny liability after an incident because you could have known or should have known the arrangement was dangerous. If you still use it, it’s on your own behalf.

In the next few pages I will discuss the arrangements we see a lot and explain why they are non-compliant. As the title already suggests: 1000 ways to rig a ladder, only on of them is right. Names of the vessels involved, will not be displayed in the article, just out of politeness. The Facebook page “dangerousladders” often displays names and destinations of the vessels involved, mainly to warn our colleagues in the port of destination that a present is underway.

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**Deck Tongue**

A photo explains more than 1000 words... Here we see an example of a so called deck tongue, installed on one of our regular visitors. Seems like a great and simple solution to install and adjust a pilot ladder, ingenious invention! Unfortunately, this system is non-compliant and therefore downright dangerous for anyone who might have to use it (pilots, agents, surveyors, crew changes etc etc).

In the next few pages I will discuss the arrangements we see a lot and explain why they are non-compliant. As the title already suggests: 1000 ways to rig a ladder, only on of them is right. Names of the vessels involved, will not be displayed in the article, just out of politeness. The Facebook page “dangerousladders” often displays names and destinations of the vessels involved, mainly to warn our colleagues in the port of destination that a present is underway.

**ISO799-1(2019) states that:** each side rope shall have a breaking strength of at least 24kN and the diameter should be 20mm (63 mm circumference) (4.2.1).

**ISO799-1(2019) states that:** each step shall have a strength of at least 8,8 kN (table A.1 production test).

**IMO1045(27) 2.1.1 the securing points etc shall be at least as strong as the side ropes.**
After reading this, we find out that each side rope can handle 2400 kilos (4800 together) and that each step can handle a weight of 880 kilos. The strength of the deck tongue? Don’t have the slightest idea... is it tested and certified?

So we buy a tested ladder that can handle about 5 tonnes on the side ropes, and then we put a step that can carry 880 kilos behind a steel plate... One touch of the pilot launch and it’s gone, rather inconvenient for the poor guy standing on the ladder at that moment.

Swell, swinging of the ship or the launch lifting the ladder can also have the dangerous result that the ladder comes loose out of this deck tongue and goes overboard.

Besides that, SECURING a ladder is something totally different than putting it behind a piece of welded steel. We all climb ladders without being secured in any way... SOLAS and IMO provide the minimum safety rules concerning the ladders, less is absolutely not more in this case...

**Bulwark setup**

Another easy way to prepare a ladder: throw it over the railing, tie the side ropes together with a piece of rope you found on deck and you have the ladder ready in a jiffy!!

The ladder is not a pilot ladder, something to get into in another article.

We have already seen that the ladder has to be secured to strongpoints on deck, well...a railing is not a deck, seems easy peasy and yet it goes wrong time after time, why? Maybe it looks easier to rig it this way.

We have already seen that the ropes of the ladder can handle almost 5 tonnes combined, just a question for the reader: are you sure the railing can handle 5 tonnes? We have all seen beaten up and damaged railings in our career, who of you hasn’t stepped on a railing piece of steel, and It gave way? We’ll never be able to find out who spot-welded the railing in a faraway shipyard many years ago.

For sure a railing can’t handle 5 tonnes.

Conclusion: ‘securing’ a ladder on a piece of railing is non-compliant and therefore dangerous. If it’s non-compliant, it’s dangerous...don’t use it!

Have them secure the ladder to strongpoints on deck and don’t forget to report them.

**Platform placed over the securing area of the ladder**

Having a platform built over the securing area of the pilot ladder is absolutely not illegal, it can even improve the access: no debris or other tripping hazards.

BUT, 99 out of 100 times, when you lift the lid, there’s a surprise underneath: a steel bar (which we’ll discuss later) a deck tongue or just nothing to hold the arrangement in place.
Basically, whenever you encounter a platform over the ladder, just ask them to lift it because you want to check the way of securing. As we have seen in the last photo, there was no securing at all!

A nice and swift way for the crew to install, and it can be a swift way for you to get down to the deck level of the pilot boat.

Secured to strongpoints on deck?........ No.
Secured to strongpoints?........ No.
Secured?........ No.

Again, it’s non-compliant and therefore dangerous, don’t use it. Have them secure it to strongpoints on deck and don’t forget to report the vessel.

**Spreader**

A spreader is a great invention to prevent a pilot ladder from twisting. Without a spreader you might look at the horizon instead of the ship’s side all of a sudden. How to get back in a good position when something like that happens? Therefore, every ladder with more than 5 steps must have a spreader (IMO A.1045(27) rule 2.1.4). That is what a spreader is made for and not for keeping a ladder secured to strongpoints on deck.

As we know from an earlier statement in the article, steps can handle 880 kilos and side ropes 2400 kilos each. That’s the main reason you can and will not secure it this way. One touch of the pilot boat and the ladder will be damaged beyond repair, as will be the poor soul standing on the ladder.

**Human Force**

I feel very lucky I’ve never ran into this method, but at least 2 of my colleagues have. Let’s just assume you have to board a vessel, the ladder has to be lowered a bit, which goes rather rapidly and before you know it you look up, see a smiling face and thumbs up “ready Mr. pilot!!”

The you start climbing, what might be a real Jacob’s ladder, you reach the top and 2 quite overweight guys stand on the side ropes on deck… horrible.

They must have read the instructions wrong. The instructions clearly state: the ladder has to be secured to strongpoints on deck and not to strong men on deck. After this case the vessel was reported, captain was angry, not with the guys on deck but with the pilot for reporting his vessels.

**Combinations**

SOLAS 23 clearly states (3.3.1): a pilot ladder requiring a climb of not less than 1,5 m and not more than 9 m above the surface of the water etc. etc.

Why 1,5 m? Well wait and see where you want to grab with a pilot ladder on a low freeboard of the vessel you have to climb onto... 3 steps over the side and nothing to hold on to.

Why 9 m? To make something clear: this has nothing to do with the length of the ladder, but only with the distance from the water surface to the deck entry point >> more than 9m? Combination.

If you drop down from distances over 9 m there is a significant risk of severe injuries or even death when you fall down. It’s all about the acceleration. (FUBAR).

We have seen that I wrote in the above picture the set up was non-compliant, but why? Looks all right or not?
To start with, the ladder is tied to the gangway. Both ladder and gangway have to be secured to the hull independently, and not together... You see the ladder is not attached to the hull this way.

Ok. Suppose they have sorted this issue and you start climbing. You reach the platform and there’s nothing to hold on to. On both sides of the platform there have to be hand hold stanchions (and horizontal ropes) so you can safely transfer from the ladder to the platform.

IMO A.1045(27)
3.2 angle of the gangway under 45 degrees.
3.3 lower platform horizontal and secured to the ship’s side. At least 5 m above the water.
3.5 stanchions and rigid handrails.
3.6 ladder adjacent to the platform, maximum distance 0,2m, secured to the ships side.

Embarkation platforms

Another name often used for this platform is “trapdoor system”. Another wonderful invention to rig a ladder, at least a number of people must have thought it would be a great system. The problem is however, the more risk on non-compliances, the more there will be. (Keep It Stupid Simple).

Ok, let’s go to the “rulebook” to see what’s wrong with this setup.

IMO A.1045(27) 3.7 is the most important one in this case. It tells us the ladder has to “extend above the lower platform to the height of the handrail and remain in alignment with and against the ship’s side.

We have already seen that the ladder has to be secured to strongpoints on deck, not the case here. Also we saw that the ladder and platform have to be secured to the ship’s hull, not the case here.

More often than not the platform has to be adjusted in height to make a safe approach of the pilot boat possible. This always happens in a jiffy which means, the winch is not mechanically secured and the system is not secured to the ships hull... all that is keeping you alive are the steel wires.

The ladder is attached under the platform, and we know now this is not correct. Whenever you reach the top of the ladder, you have to lean back, grab some pieces of steel and drag yourself through the gap (750x750mm) in the platform. During rain this system works as a nice shower as well: water collected on the platform and gangway will find its way down through the gap.

Here are a lot of reasons why someone climbing this setup can fall back down into the water or onto the pilot boat. And yes it happens every year again, with severe injuries or worse. It’s inconvenient, slippery and dangerous; reject and abort.

So the ladder has to run through the platform, must be secured to the already mentioned strongpoints, and had to rest firmly against the ship’s hull as well, all not the case here.

I would love to show a compliant embarkation platform system, but in over 10 years of pilotage I have come across the most sickening fantasies in construction but never ever a compliant one, sorry dear reader.

Pilot ladder winch reel
First the “IMO-rulebook” again...

7.1.1 Position of the winch must provide unobstructed access to the ship. Here we see it’s not the case: if you keep climbing you’ll end up on top of the winch.

7.1.2 Point of access may be a ship’s side opening, accommodation ladder or a single section of pilot ladder. In this set up you have to step sideways to the deck and in another section of this article we have already seen this is not allowed. What if, due to the freeboard a spreader is obstructing your unobstructed access??

7.1.3 The access position and area should be clear of obstructions. Therefore, the winch has to be placed basically out of your way.

Continued over on page 24
Here we see a correct part of the well-known pilot ladder poster, it makes the rule clear. Suppose the ladder is secured to the deck at the opening? This is a risk for someone climbing: when he reaches in he can grab hold of a part of the ladder on the other side of the securing and fall down. It has happened to one of my colleagues over here, he wasn’t able to work for over 6 months and gained a few kilos in weight only due to the nuts and bolts keeping his foot together. You’ll understand the 915 mm makes sense. Haven’t met anyone yet with arms longer than 915mm.

Also the system is secured in more ways: the ladder is secured to strongpoints, the winch is on the brake and (7.5.6) a mechanical device or locking pin should also be utilized to lock powered winch reels. Again we see: the more difficult, the more non compliances.

And the most important rule I want to stress on in this part is rule 7.4.2: the pilot ladder should be secured to a strongpoint independent of the pilot ladder winch reel AND 7.4.3: the ladder should be secured at deck level inside the ship’s opening or, when located on the ship’s upper deck, at a distance of not less then 915mm horizontally from the ship’s side inwards.

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In this final picture in this section we can clearly see the spreader is obstructing your safe access to the ship, and again you have to stumble side ways.

Conclusion in this section: RTFM, or look at the poster.

**Shackles (why and why not)**

On the photo below we see that the shackles have been used often to keep the ladder in place. The photo shows really well what effect the steel shackles have on the manilla ropes: twisted and beaten up... just wonder if this ladder will pass the 30-month compulsory strength test (ISO799-1/2019 10.4).

Shackles are an easy way for the crew to keep a ladder in place, but is it actually securing the side ropes??? No it’s not. When weight is put on the ladder, the ladder will move freely under the shackles until the next chocks and step has reached the shackles.
Basically, the ladder will be held in place solely by step and chocks. Let’s think back a moment, we have seen that each side rope can handle 2400 kilos and that a step can handle 880 kilos.

If or when the pilot launch hits the ladder, it will be ripped to pieces. 800 kilos instead of 4800 kilos.

So we see that the shackles ruin the side ropes and that the force is put to the steps and not the side ropes. Why still use this setup would be an genuine question. The answer is simple: IMO allows it:

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 specified etc etc.

This sentence is the only permission in the IMO regulations for using shackles over ropes, with the result we have seen on the photo. Different countries (New Zealand, UK etc) have already declared shackles non-compliant… have you rigged a ladder with shackles? Ok no pilot for you!

Correct way of rigging a ladder

After all the don’ts finally a do… What is the best practice to secure the ladder to strongpoints on deck? This is it… nothing to it, simple and safe!

We saw in the previous section that the securing ropes must at least have the same strength as the side ropes and that makes sense doesn’t it? 2400 kilos secured by a rope of 2400 kilos strength. The rolling hitch knot.

The better ladder manufacturers supply securing ropes with every ladder they provide. Use these ropes. Don’t use some random piece of rope you have found in the bosun’s shop or strops or what else. It’s an easy to do knot, every able seaman knows how to tie this knot.

No stress on the steps. No stress on the chocks. Side ropes will not be destroyed by the shackles. The ladder will last longer and therefore save money to the shipping company.

Epilogue

I hope you have enjoyed reading this article and maybe you’ve seen some practices used on your own ship. Don’t hesitate to step forward and change it to a compliant system.

IMPA Website

For access to the members area of the website enter in your details in home/register and access will be granted.
A member recently suggested that the Association ought to encourage Pilots to send photographs of their everyday work in for publication in this magazine.

The published photographers and their Districts would be credited, and we will send an IMPA necktie/scarf to all contributors.

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