



# ON STATION

The Newsletter of the American Pilots' Association

March 15, 2021

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**MAERSK**

## BIG STEPS FOR BIG BLUE?

In February, shipping giant Maersk published new guidance on pilot transfer safety. Specifically, the company issued "Maersk Safety Alert 01-2021: Combination Ladder-Trapdoor Arrangements." In addition, in early March Maersk reached out to APA and provided a briefing on steps the company has planned to introduce newly designed trapdoor arrangements.

The Safety Alert, which was distributed to all APA-member pilot groups and is available on APA's website ([www.americanpilots.org](http://www.americanpilots.org), under "News Items of Interest"), addresses the major SOLAS requirements for combination-trapdoor arrangements and also provides photos of noncompliant trapdoor configurations. Many of these photos came from APA-member pilot groups.

After making clear that the purpose of the SOLAS regulations and International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards for combination / trapdoor arrangements "is to bring the ladder steps up to a level from which the pilot can step across to the platform rather than pull himself or herself up to it," Maersk Safety Alert 01-2021 goes on to state that for trapdoor arrangements:

- The Pilot Ladder must extend above the lower platform to the [platform's] side rails;
- The Pilot Ladder must be firmly attached to the ship's side at a height of 1.5 meters above the platform; and
- All steps of a pilot ladder must lie flat against the side of the ship.

Figuring prominently in the Alert is the APA-developed drawing of a compliant combination-trapdoor arrangement.

The Safety Alert also gives an update on Maersk's progress to modify noncompliant arrangements in its fleet. In fact, Maersk notes that more than 45 noncompliant pilot transfer arrangements within the Maersk fleet are in the modification process. The Safety Alert goes on to urge all vessels

with a trapdoor arrangement to notify them of their arrangement status. Vessels with noncompliant arrangements are asked to come forward with their short and long-term actions to bring their arrangements into compliance with IMO standards.

APA President, Captain Jorge Viso took the opportunity to forward this Safety Alert to the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) and the U.S. Coast Guard, encouraging them to approve the Maersk trapdoor modifications in order to advance the safety of pilots domestically and throughout the world.

About a month after the publication of Safety Alert 01-2021, Maersk reached out to the APA to offer a briefing on the steps the shipping company has taken to address the problems with the combination/trapdoor arrangements installed on its ships, including specifically discussion of a new design for this arrangement. This briefing was given to APA Officers on March 11th as a TEAMS presentation.

This presentation included a discussion of how the new design, which Maersk says has gone through several structural design iterations, would comply with the IMO standards (discussed earlier in this article), as well as detailed engineering drawings of the updated design and the results of strength assessments and stress tests for the new equipment.

The Maersk official conducting the briefing also indicated that the company had worked with the ABS and Lloyds Register on ensuring the new combination/trapdoor arrangement was properly "classed." Finally, Maersk indicated that presently the plan is to have the new design in place on all of the ships in its fleet (that use trapdoor configurations) in the next "three months."

This work with Maersk is another step forward in APA's ongoing efforts to improve pilot ladder / transfer arrangement safety. Captain Jorge Viso stressed, "We will continue to work with member pilots, the Coast Guard, IMO, IMPA, ISO, classification societies, shipping companies and other like-minded pilot associations around the world on this and other matters that can impact pilot safety."



## HTW7 “MEETS” TO DISCUSS MARINER CREDENTIALING IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

The meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of IMO’s Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watch-keeping (HTW7) was held virtually from February 15-19. This was the first remote session of an IMO subcommittee and there were certainly logistical challenges with this format. APA’s Executive Director-General Counsel, Clay Diamond, and IMPA’s Secretary General, Nick Cutmore, represented pilots at this meeting.

Among the agenda items covered by HTW7 was a discussion of challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created both for mariners and the agencies around the world that issue mariner credentials. These discussions focused on steps IMO may have to take as the COVID-19 pandemic drags on to ensure countries have clear authority to extend the validity of mariner certificates and documents beyond what is currently permitted by the STCW Convention. In the U.S., for example, the Coast Guard has publicly discussed its limits—under both domestic and international law—on extending mariner credentials.

Work on the development of electronic mariner certificates (eCertificates) also continued during this latest session of HTW. A working group was established last year at HTW6 to begin developing an outline for eCertificate requirements and this working group was directed to continue its work for the next year. This group, of which APA is a participating member, has identified a number of serious security and authentication hurdles that must be overcome before eCertificates could become a reality.

According to the latest IMO guidance, meetings will continue to be virtual until at least July 2021.

### AMERICAN PILOTS’ ASSOCIATION

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## PILOT TRANSFER SAFETY RAISED AT IMO

*ON STATION* readers are aware of APA and IMPA efforts to promote pilot ladder safety. These efforts continue to gain traction. In addition to the actions by Maersk (discussed on page 1) and the pilot ladder safety bulletin issued by the Coast Guard in November 2020, there is recent activity at IMO.

China has submitted an “informational” or INF paper to the 8th Session IMO’s Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications, and Search & Rescue (NCSR8), to be held virtually from April 19-23. As its name implies, an INF paper is submitted for informational purposes only and does not request specific actions from IMO. These papers can, however, lay the groundwork for future substantive action.

In its paper, titled “Considerations to improve the safety of pilot transfer arrangements,” China notes that while “pilots are indispensable to the safe and efficient movement of seagoing vessels, boarding and disembarking of vessels at sea remains a perilous activity undertaken by maritime pilots around the world.” Among the ideas discussed by China in its INF paper were: maintenance and inspection requirements for ladders be included in SOLAS regulation V/23); a Concentrated Inspection Campaign on pilot transfer arrangements be carried out worldwide to improve the enforcement of IMO standards’ and a sketch of a SOLAS-complaint trapdoor be incorporated into the IMPA poster of required boarding arrangements. IMPA has already been considering modifying its pilot transfer arrangement poster.

As APA representatives are members of both the U.S. and IMPA delegations to NCSR8, APA will support the Chinese INF paper as another vehicle to advance the interests of pilot safety internationally. For more on pilot ladders, see page 5.



**IMO**  
2021

**SEAFARERS:**  
AT THE CORE OF  
SHIPPING’S FUTURE

## IMO CHOSES THEME FOR 2021 WORLD MARITIME DAY

IMO has chosen “*Seafarers: At the Core of Shipping’s Future*” as the theme for 2021 World Maritime Day (held annually during the last week of September to honor mariners and shipping).

In announcing the theme, IMO Secretary General, Kitack Lim, said, “Through these difficult times, the international community has seen how the ability for shipping services and seafarers to deliver vital goods, including medical supplies and food, has been central to responding to, and eventually overcoming, this pandemic. This could not happen without the professionalism and dedication of the world’s seafarers.”





## COAST GUARD CLARIFIES “MASK MANDATE”

On February 1, 2021, the Coast Guard issued Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) 02-21, *COVID-19 Safety Requirements in the Marine Transportation System*. This MSIB stated that masks are required to be “worn on all ‘public maritime vessels, including ferries’ to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19.” MSIB 02-21 created a great deal of confusion for mariners and within the maritime industry because “public vessel” has a specific meaning under U.S. maritime regulations.

Under federal regulations, “public vessel” generally means a vessel owned or chartered and operated by the United States, by a State, or by a foreign nation, and not engaged in commerce. Because the MSIB 02-21 used the non-regulatory term “public maritime vessels, including ferries,” it had most in the maritime sector initially understanding that the mask mandate only applied to government owned/operated vessels and ferries.

This was **NOT** the intent of the MSIB, so this confusion caused the Coast Guard to issue a February 9th “clarification” to MSIB 02-21. This clarifying message made clear that the **mask mandate applies to all commercial vessels moving in waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction (U.S. and foreign flag)**, which is inclusive of fishing vessels, uninspected passenger vessels, cargo ships, tankers, charter passenger vessels, ferries, towing vessels, etc.

The Coast Guard and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also made clear there are exemptions to the mask mandate. The guidance from these agencies states that **masks must be worn unless their wear would pose a risk to personal/workplace safety or interfere with job duties**. Considering pilots must exert themselves climbing pilot ladders and are required to communicate clearly with bridge crews, it is foreseeable that these exemptions could at times apply to pilot duties.

In its February 9th clarification, the Coast Guard stresses that it “continues to work closely with the CDC to address the unique challenges posed by shipboard operations...as they pertain to the mask mandate.” Additional questions or comments related to mask wear on commercial vessels can be directed to [wearamask@uscg.mil](mailto:wearamask@uscg.mil).



## COAST GUARD UPDATES CREDENTIAL EXTENSION BULLETIN

On December 23, 2020, the National Maritime Center (NMC) issued Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) 08-20, Change 5: COVID-19 – Mariner Credentials Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements, Medical Certificates and Course Approvals.

This update provides guidance concerning the extension of expiration dates for mariner credentials and medical certificates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the MSIB, the Coast Guard states that under their “current statutory authority, the expiration dates of merchant mariner credentials may be extended for no more than one year.”

The MSIB also warns that these mitigation efforts “may cause a backlog in the processing of credentials and course approvals, especially near the end of the extension dates, [as a result] mariners... are strongly encouraged to fulfill the requirements and submit applications as early as possible in order to avoid a lapse in their credential.”

To mitigate the impact on mariners and the maritime industry caused by COVID-19, the Coast Guard is taking the following actions:

**Merchant Mariner Credentials** (National Endorsements only, including First Class Pilot Endorsements) that expire between March 1st, 2020 and June 30th, 2021 are extended until the EARLIER of:

- October 31, 2021; OR
- One (1) year after the initial expiration date of the credential (i.e., one year after the expiration date printed on the credential).

Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the extension criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this notice.

**Medical Certificates** (National, Pilot, or STCW) that expire between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 are extended until the EARLIER of:

- October 31, 2021; OR
- One (1) year after the initial expiration date of the medical certificate (i.e., one year after the expiration date printed on the certificate).

The MSIB also states, “46 USC § 7101(e)(3) requires that pilots undergo an annual physical examination each year while holding a credential. The Coast Guard does not intend to enforce this requirement given the current pandemic and its impacts on health care providers. This posture applies until October 31, 2021 irrespective of when the medical certificate expires.”



## ISO PILOT LADDER STANDARDS CONTINUE TO PROGRESS

As discussed at APA meetings (and as reported in past editions of *ON STATION*), SOLAS regulation on Pilot Transfer Arrangements (V/23) requires a pilot ladder to be certified by the manufacturer as complying with V/23 or with an international standard acceptable to IMO. This “acceptable” international standard is International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard 799:2004. The ISO standard has been undergoing an update for the past several years, and APA Navigation Technology Director, Bill Cairns has been chairing the revising body since last February.

In updating ISO 799, it was decided to split the standard into three parts: (1) construction standards; (2) maintenance, use, survey and inspection standards; and (3) attachments and associated equipment standards. The construction standard was published in February 2019 as ISO 799-1:2019. ISO has just moved its draft standard on maintenance, use, survey, and inspection of pilot ladders to “ballot” as a Final Draft International Standard (FDIS). The balloting ends April 13th and assuming a positive vote, ISO 799-2 should be published later this year.

The last part of the 799 series, attachments and associated equipment standards for pilot ladders, was moved to Draft International Standard (DIS) status on March 7th, with plans for it to move to FDIS and then publishing later this year as ISO 799-3. When completed, we anticipate 799-1, 799-2 and 799-3 will be moved into a single ISO standard.

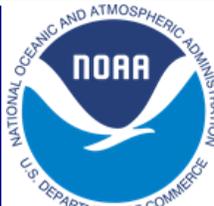
APA President Captain Jorge Viso has made pilot ladder safety a top priority, so APA staff will continue to actively participate in all relevant forums where pilot ladder safety can be advanced.



## APA DISTRIBUTES PILOT LADDER APP

On February 18, APA distributed to all member-pilot groups an App called, “SAFEPILOTLADDER.” The purpose of this App is to easily facilitate reporting of pilot transfer arrangement deficiencies to appropriate authorities (e.g., pilot commissions, Coast Guard, etc.). The App can be tailored to meet local needs and requirements of individual pilot groups.

Pilot groups are encouraged to take advantage of this App and to contact the APA office with any questions about its use or functions.



## NOAA BEGINS PROCESS TO “SUNSET” PAPER CHARTS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently issued a news release stating that it will begin to implement its sunset plan for paper nautical charts in March.

The NOAA Office of Coast Survey Raster Sunset Plan includes a new process to notify mariners of the transition of individual paper charts to electronic charts. These electronic charts are intended to be easier to update and maintain, including more up-to-date information on marine hazards.

As part of the sunset plan released in 2019, mariners will be notified of a chart’s cancellation in the U.S. Coast Guard Local Notice to Mariners. A note in the lower left corner of the chart will state that it is the last paper edition and it will be canceled six months later.

NOAA will continue to announce the cancellation of paper charts as the sunset plan progresses, initially based on volume of sales or downloads, and in regions with improved NOAA electronic navigational chart coverage. Cancellation of all traditional paper and associated raster chart products is scheduled to be completed by January 2025.

While NOAA is sunsetting its traditional nautical chart products, it is undertaking a major effort to improve the data consistency and provide larger scale coverage within its electronic navigational chart product suite.

Over the next four years, NOAA will work to ease the transition to electronic products by providing access to paper chart products based on electronic data. The online NOAA Custom Chart tool enables users to create their own paper and PDF charts from the latest NOAA ENC data. This tool is available at:

<https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/updates/explore-the-refreshed-enc-based-noaa-custom-chart-tool/>

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# APA NEWS

## SANDY HOOK PILOTS NEAR COMPLETION OF STATION BOAT TRANSITION



The Sandy Hook Pilots are in the process of converting a former Oil Spill Response Vessel (the *Maine Responder*) into a new Pilot Station Vessel.



Artists rendition of the new "Pilot Boat New York"

JMS Naval Architects were hired to provide the marine surveying and naval architecture services to evaluate the vessel prior to purchase and then to develop the conversion concept design. The conversion project is underway at Feeney Shipyard of Kingston, NY. The estimated project completion date is June 2021.

The Sandy Hook pilots have been piloting ships in the New York harbor for more than 300 years. They operate a pilot station boat by Ambrose Light year-round and in all weather conditions. As a result, they require a robust vessel to serve the entrance to New York Harbor, Hudson River, Hell's Gate, and Long Island Sound. The current *Pilot Boat New York* is the largest vessel in the Sandy Hook Pilots' fleet and has served them well for the past 49 years, but is due to be retired.

The *Maine Responder* will be renamed and christened as *Pilot Boat New York*.

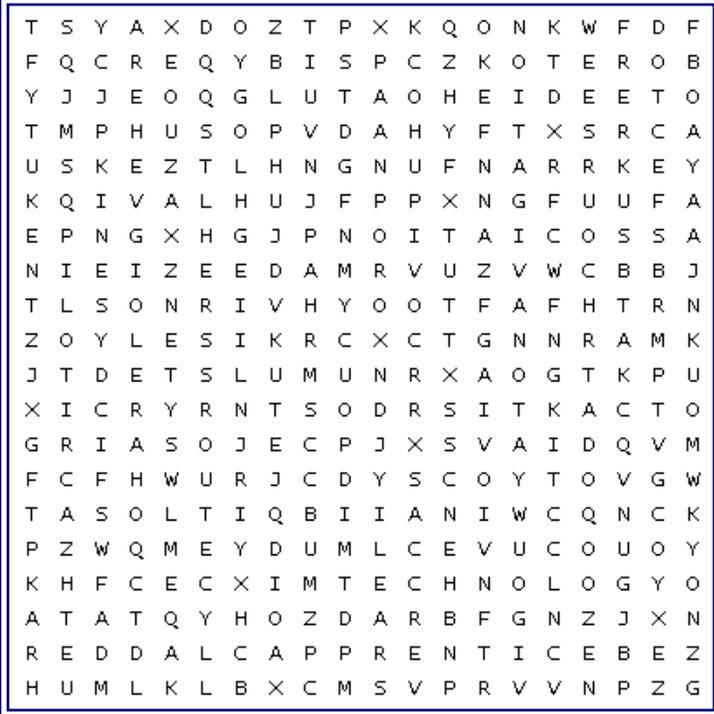
### 2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

The 2021 Meeting of the APA Board of Trustees will be held—IN PERSON—at the Intercontinental Hotel at the Wharf in Washington, DC from October 18-20. Information about this meeting has been sent to APA Officers, Trustees and Member Pilot Groups.

### PILOT WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

There are 15 words associated with pilots or piloting hidden in the puzzle below. Can you find all of them?

The first pilot to provide the correct list of words to APA will win a valuable prize (well, an APA hat anyway!). As soon as you find all 15 words, send your answers to: [Lisa@americanpilots.org](mailto:Lisa@americanpilots.org).



### ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

The following pilots' associations announced new officers:

- ◆ Pascagoula Bar Pilots Association: **Captain Darryl E. Langley** (President), **Captain Daniel E. Whyte** (Vice President), and **Captain Fredrick A. Lundy** (Treasurer/Secretary).
- ◆ Biscayne Bay Pilots Association: **Captain Geoffrey Pool** (Chairman), **Captain James Williams** (Vice Chairman) and **Captain Christopher Kincaid** (Secretary / Treasurer).
- ◆ United New York Sandy Hook Pilots: **Captain John J. DeCruz** (President), **Captain Andrew E. Glassing** (Vice President), **Captain Joshua J. Pieterse** (Secretary), and **Captain Charles J. Mayrer** (Treasurer).
- ◆ United New Jersey Sandy Hook Pilots: **Captain Brendan L. Foley** (President), **Captain Harold F. Cavagnaro** (Vice President), **Captain Mark Wanderer** (Secretary), and **Captain Kevin J. Walsh** (Treasurer).