

Port of Ashburton – Requirements for the maintenance and safe use of Pilot Ladders

Number: A19/2026

Date: 25/08/2026

Date of Effect:	Immediate
Details:	Port of Ashburton – Requirements for the maintenance and safe use of Pilot Ladders
Former Notice:	A04-2023
Charts & Publications:	N/A
Further Notice:	N/A
Attachments:	Annex 1 – Examples of Non-Compliant and Acceptable Pilot Transfer Arrangements Annex 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

This Marine Notice establishes the minimum requirements for the maintenance, certification, inspection and safe use of pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment for vessels calling at the Port of Ashburton.

These requirements have been developed with reference to SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23, relevant IMO pilot transfer arrangement requirements, AMSA Marine Notice 04/2023 and the ISO 799 series standards.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Pilot Ladder and Manrope Certification

Pilot ladders shall comply with SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23 or ISO 799-1:2019, including construction, materials, inspection and certification requirements; be certified by the manufacturer and have a permanently affixed identification plate indicating the date of manufacture. Original certification for pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment shall be retained onboard and made available for inspection upon request by Pilbara Ports.

2. Age Limits

The following maximum age limits apply:

Equipment	Maximum Age
Pilot Ladder	30 months from date of manufacture unless strength tested in accordance with ISO 799-1:2019.
Manrope	12 months from date of manufacture.

Manropes used for pilot transfer operations shall be Grade 1 Manila rope, have a diameter between 28 mm and 32 mm, and be supported by valid certification retained onboard. Where requested by the pilot, two manropes shall be provided, properly secured and ready for use.

Pilot ladders and manropes showing signs of deterioration, contamination or damage shall be removed from service regardless of age.

3. Use of Pilot Transfer Equipment

Pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment shall be used solely for marine transfer operations and shall not be used for draft readings, maintenance activities, cargo operations or any other purpose.

Equipment should be clearly identified as: **"FOR MARINE TRANSFERS ONLY"**.

4. Rigging and Securing Arrangements

Pilot ladders shall be rigged in accordance with applicable IMO and ISO requirements and secured to approved deck strong points in a manner that transfers load directly through the ladder side ropes.

The following arrangements are prohibited:

- Shackles passed through pilot ladder side ropes.
- Steel bars used to shorten ladders.
- Deck tongues or similar arrangements used to support ladder loads.
- Any arrangements that transfer weight onto ladder steps, spreaders or chocks.
- Any arrangement that may damage the pilot ladder, side ropes or associated components.

Where a pilot ladder cannot be secured at its thimble ends due to vessel freeboard, load shall be transferred directly from the ladder side ropes to approved deck strong points using suitable rope stopper arrangements. It is recommended that two strong manila rope stoppers, each having a minimum breaking strength of 24 kN, are used for this purpose. Rolling hitch arrangements should be used where appropriate. Rope stoppers should be regularly inspected and replaced when deterioration, wear or damage is identified and, in any case, not later than 12 months from the date of manufacture.

5. Combination Ladders and Winch Reels

Combination ladder arrangements and pilot ladder winch reels shall comply with applicable SOLAS, IMO requirements, including MSC.1/Circ.1428 where applicable, and ISO requirements.

Where a combination ladder arrangement is used, it shall comply with applicable SOLAS, IMO and ISO requirements. The accommodation ladder shall be independently secured to the vessel's side and the lower platform maintained in a horizontal position. The pilot ladder shall extend at least 2 metres above the lower platform in accordance with IMO pilot transfer arrangement requirements.

Where pilot ladders are stowed on winch reels, the winch reel shall not take the operational load of the ladder. The pilot ladder shall be independently secured to an approved deck strong point and the reel secured against accidental operation.

6. Inspection, Maintenance and Repairs

Vessel operators shall ensure pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment are regularly inspected, properly maintained and stored in a manner that prevents deterioration from sunlight, chemicals, paint, oils or other contaminants.

Maintenance of pilot transfer equipment shall be included within the vessel's Planned Maintenance System (PMS) and inspection records retained onboard.

Repairs to pilot ladders shall only be undertaken by the manufacturer, a manufacturer-approved facility, a Flag State approved facility or a Classification Society approved facility.

7. Competency and Supervision

Pilot transfer arrangements shall be rigged by trained and competent crew, inspected by a responsible officer prior to use and appropriately supervised during pilot boarding and disembarkation operations.

8. Non-Acceptable Equipment

The following equipment will not be accepted for pilot transfer operations:

- Pilot ladders with side ropes constructed from sisal rope.
- Pilot ladders incorporating splices, repairs or modifications within side ropes.
- Damaged pilot ladders or manropes.
- Uncertified pilot transfer equipment.
- Equipment exceeding the age limits specified within this Marine Notice.

COMPLIANCE

Any vessel presenting a pilot transfer arrangement that is damaged, improperly rigged, inadequately maintained or otherwise non-compliant may be required to rectify the deficiency before pilot boarding, port entry, departure or other marine operations are permitted.

Pilbara Ports may require additional verification, inspection or documentary evidence where concerns exist regarding the condition or compliance of pilot transfer arrangements.

Prashanta Kaushik
Harbour Master - Marine West (Acting)
Pilbara Ports

ANNEX 1 – EXAMPLES OF NON-COMPLIANT AND ACCEPTABLE PILOT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS

Examples of incorrect securing methods of pilot ladders in practice



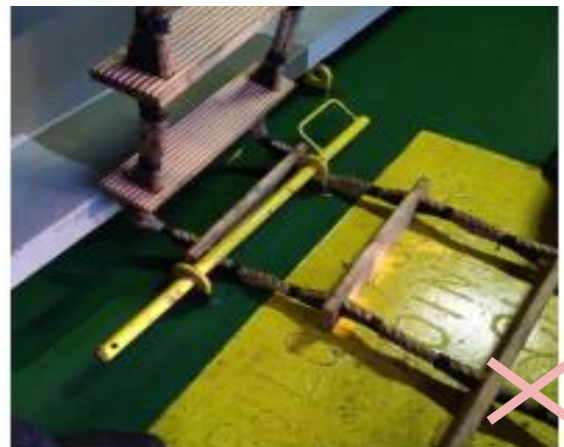
Secured using shackles, risk of damage to the chocks



Secured using deck tongue, weight on the step



Non-compliant combination ladder arrangement



Secured using steel bar, weight on the step



Spreader used for securing & tripping line secured (must be over the 1st spreader from bottom and leading in the forward direction)



Ladder on the reel & not secured incorrectly rigged

Examples of non-compliant construction



Last four steps must be rubber, incorrect positioning of tripping line



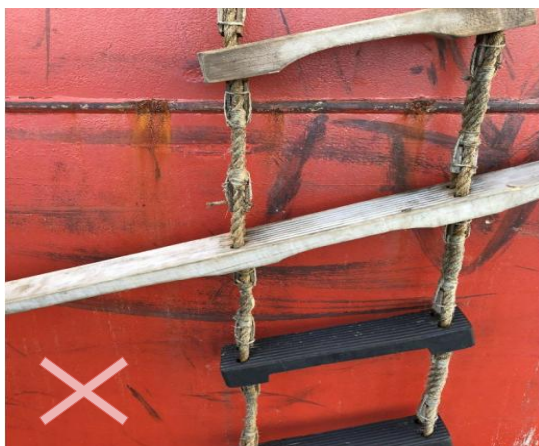
5th step must be a spreader



Bull Dog Grips: Not Permitted



Spreader not made from a single piece of wood



Loose ladder steps & not horizontal



Painted steps

ANNEX 2 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can a pilot ladder be used after 30 months from the date of manufacture?

Yes. A pilot ladder may continue to be used beyond 30 months from the date of manufacture provided it has successfully completed ladder and step attachment strength testing in accordance with ISO 799-1:2019 and the testing interval does not exceed 30 months. Documentary evidence must be retained onboard.

2. Who may conduct ladder and step attachment strength testing?

Testing must be carried out by the manufacturer, a manufacturer-approved facility, a facility approved by the vessel's Flag State, or a facility approved by the vessel's Classification Society.

3. How long is a ladder and step attachment strength test valid for?

The testing interval must not exceed 30 months. A pilot ladder will be considered non-compliant if the most recent ladder and step attachment strength test is more than 30 months old.

4. Can vessel crew repair a pilot ladder?

No. Repairs to pilot ladders must only be carried out by the manufacturer, a manufacturer-approved facility, a facility approved by the vessel's Flag State, or a facility approved by the vessel's Classification Society.

5. What is the replacement period for manropes?

Manropes used for pilot transfer operations must be Grade 1 Manila rope, between 28 mm and 32 mm in diameter, and replaced no later than 12 months from the date of manufacture. Valid certification must be retained onboard.

6. Can a pilot ladder be secured using shackles or steel bars to shorten the ladder?

No. Securing arrangements that transfer weight onto ladder steps, spreaders or chocks are not acceptable. Pilot ladders should be secured directly through the side ropes to approved strong points using suitable rope stopper arrangements.

7. What should be done if the pilot ladder cannot be secured at its thimble ends?

Where vessel freeboard prevents securing at the thimble ends, the ladder should be secured using suitable rope stoppers attached to approved strong points that transfer load directly through the ladder side ropes. Guidance on acceptable arrangements is provided in AMSA Marine Notice 04/2023.

8. If the vessel normally embarks and disembarks pilots by helicopter, is a compliant pilot ladder still required?

Yes. Pilot boarding arrangements may change at short notice due to operational requirements, weather conditions or equipment availability. All vessels calling at the Port of Ashburton must maintain a compliant pilot transfer arrangement regardless of the anticipated method of pilot transfer.

9. Do pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment need to be used exclusively for marine transfers?

Yes. Pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment are to be used solely for marine transfer operations and should not be used for draft readings, maintenance activities or any other purpose.