

Sharing lessons learned

VIRP Digest is a quarterly e-bulletin, sharing 'lessons learned' from maritime accidents, incidents, and near-misses uploaded by HELMEPA member-vessels to the Voluntary Incident Reporting Platform (VIRP).

Collective impact

To date, **1,003** reports have been uploaded to VIRP by 46 member managing companies that are logged on. Recent upgrade of the VIRP provides users with a wide range of new capabilities and statistical research, enabling smoother user interface and better detection of emerging trends.

Being part of safety cause

All managing companies-members of HELMEPA are provided, upon request, with an exclusive access code to upload their vessels' incidents and near misses and view all the database reports and emerging trends through a wide variety of filters.

Fostering proactiveness and sustainability

Sharing 'lessons learned' from the analysis of previous incidents helps avoid the human errors that lead to the repetition of similar incidents and accidents in the future. Active participation of a company in the VIRP reinforces a strong maritime safety culture at all company levels.



Embarking and disembarking a vessel using a pilot ladder is a high-risk activity and failing to provide safe access can be fatal. The UK's MAIB 2021 annual review recorded 200+ pilot ladder incidents, several of which involved failures during pilot use.

Complying with Pilot Ladder Regulations

VIRP highlights two important issues under the industry's spotlight:

- **Use of sub-standard pilot ladders**
- **Need to consider gender equality when planning for work on-board**

Other near-miss VIRP reports record serious defects to accommodation ladders during regular maintenance/ inspection works i.e. both turntables being stuck, three out of four wire rope thimble pins found cracked, damage (wear and tear) to side ropes etc. Such defects pose a great danger for the ladder's structural integrity, and it could be a reason for serious accident or casualty.

ROOT CAUSES

- Non-compliance with relevant legislation i.e. SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 23 & IMO Resolution A.1045(27) on Pilot Transfer Arrangements
- Poor maintenance/ Equipment failure
- Inadequate management / supervision
- Poor safety culture/situational awareness

Therefore, the importance of regular inspection and maintenance of pilot ladders to be performed in accordance with the vessel's Planned Maintenance System (PMS) to identify any deficiencies cannot be overstated.

It is very important to also inspect all components of the specific equipment and the inspection should be as thorough as possible to identify potential defects and/or hazards.

With regards to female seafarers, as the ship culture is more the reflection of masculine values, it is necessary for companies to integrate gender dimension into their policies/procedures and to comprehend what keeps women underrepresented in maritime industry such as discrimination, sexual harassment, limited career opportunities and physical constraints. Only through commitment from the top it will be possible to cultivate and nurture a gender-balance culture.

While a cape size bulk carrier was at Las Palmas anchorage (March 2022) and crew change was underway, a sign-on female Deck Cadet nearly fell from the pilot ladder during her embarkation under moderate weather conditions. The vessel has 6.7m freeboard and the female Deck Cadet was the first to embark the vessel using port side pilot ladder. She grabbed the ladder and started to climb, yet she couldn't continue.



A **risk assessment** for safe transfer of people by pilot ladder should be part of each vessel's Safety Management System.

When considering the risk of use of a pilot ladder for transfer, as a minimum, attention should be given to:

- The experience and capability of people using the pilot ladder
- The physical demands of using a pilot ladder, especially in the case of female seafarers and visitors
- Sea state and weather conditions i.e. boarding side should be protected from the weather
- The ability of a launch or other vessel to act as a platform to safely transfer people to or from a pilot ladder
- Measures to prevent falls
- Emergency response if a person using the pilot ladder falls
- Use of other means of transfer which present a lower risk under circumstances

Safety First

The pilot ladder should be in good condition and regularly inspected

Post-incident reports often detect poor condition of side ropes, that a routine visual inspection would have easily detected. Prior and after use the pilot ladder must be inspected to identify any damage done. Pilot ladders should be less than 30 months old – the year of assembly or reassembly can be found on ID plate usually located on lower spreader.

The pilot ladder should be safely rigged

Incidents often include inappropriate rigging arrangements i.e. the use of shackles or ladders attached to guardrails. Pilot ladders should be secured to deck strong points by a rope stopper lashed to the ladder's side ropes. Steps should be horizontal and evenly spaced, clean and in good overall condition.

Preparation of access point

The access point and surrounding deck area must be free of obstructions with adequate lighting, when necessary. Communication and lifesaving appliances should always be available at near reach.

Special arrangements in the case of embarkation/disembarkation of female seafarers and visitors

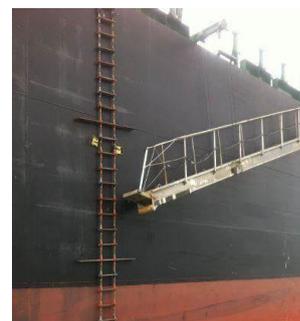
Consider making additional arrangements to facilitate the embarkation/disembarkation of female seafarers and visitors.

Overlooking embarkation/disembarkation

Embarkation or disembarkation of a pilot or other guest must be always overlooked by a suitably qualified crew member with instant communication to the bridge.

Safe storage

When not in use, the pilot ladder needs to be covered to avoid exposure to contaminants or other elements that may cause degradation and failure.



Useful free resources

- AMSA Marine Notice 03/022 [Pilot Transfer Arrangements](#)
- CHIRP Maritime: [2019 Analysis of pilot ladder fallings](#)
[1,000 ways to secure a pilot ladder](#)
- Hong Kong Marine Dept: [PSC deficiencies related to pilot transfer arrangements](#)
- International Marine Pilots Association: [Safety Campaign 2021 Results](#)
[Required Boarding Arrangements for Pilot poster](#)
[Origins of the IMPA pilot mark - Marine-Pilots.com](#)
- Lloyd's Register video [Safe set-up of pilot ladders](#)
- Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) [One Small Step... for Maritime Safety](#)
- Pilot Ladder Safety [Manual Guide including checklist](#)
- The Nautical Institute [Pilot Ladder Safety Webinar – April 2022](#)
- UK P&I Club video [Lessons Learnt – Serious injury to pilot](#)

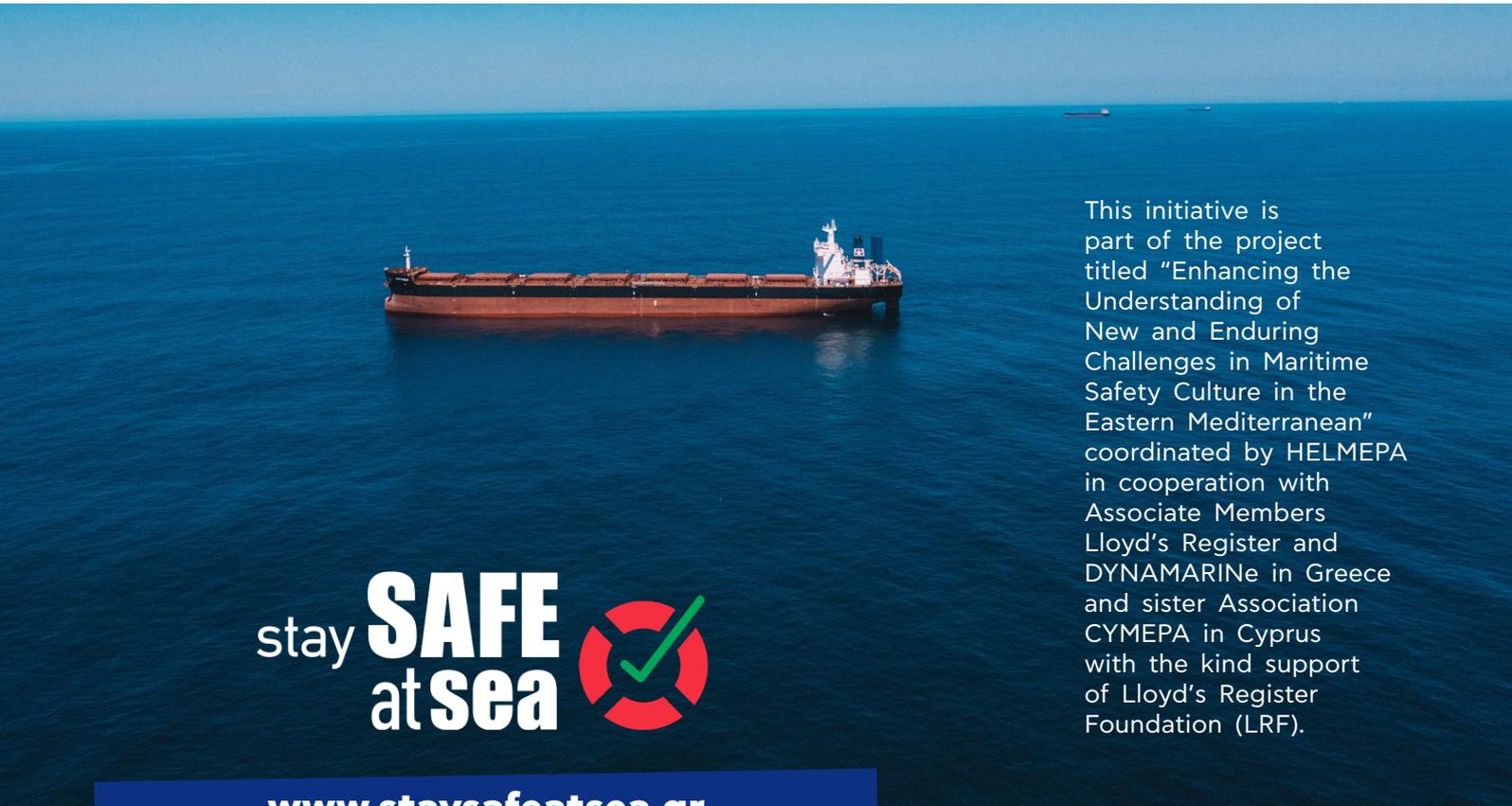
JOIN EASY

UPLOAD ANONYMOUSLY SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Join VIRP + Upload your company's most significant incident or near-miss reports directly [here](#) and help us enhance maritime safety culture. Special importance is placed on submitting High Potential (HiPo) incidents or near-miss that under other circumstances could have resulted in one or more fatalities.

Note

All information uploaded is strictly anonymous. HELMEPA is the Administrator of VIRP.



This initiative is part of the project titled "Enhancing the Understanding of New and Enduring Challenges in Maritime Safety Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean" coordinated by HELMEPA in cooperation with Associate Members Lloyd's Register and DYNAMARINE in Greece and sister Association CYMEPA in Cyprus with the kind support of Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF).

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