Steve Cameron of CMR writes on the safety issues surrounding pilot boarding ladder arrangements

**The dangers pilots face when boarding**

For a maritime pilot, embarking and disembarking a ship remains a dangerous task and is an operation that has changed little over the years. The death of Captain Dennis Sherwood, a 35-year veteran pilot, killed after he fell while boarding the US- flagged *Maersk Kensington* as she arrived at New York in December, 2019, is a sad reminder of the dangers that still exist, despite the plethora of regulations and their associated audits.

In a letter to the IMO, Captain Simon Pelletier, President of the International Maritime Pilots Association (IMPA), stated that the *Maersk Kensington* was using a combination of pilot and accommodation ladders, a statutory requirement where the height exceeds nine metres. The arrangement included a platform at the bottom of the accommodation ladder with a trapdoor-like opening through which pilots have to pull themselves to get a secure footing on the platform. Pelletier said that this arrangement had long been considered unsafe by pilots, and uncompliant with SOLAS requirements. He urged the IMO to step up inspection and enforcement of IMO pilot transfer standards.

In Southampton, where a problem was encountered with a similar design, the port, through its Notices to Mariners, advised it would support pilots who considered this design unsafe. As a result, the shipping line involved drew up a new boarding arrangement and obtained classification society approval.

A Pilot Ladder Safety survey by IMPA in 2018 identifiedBottom of Formthat vessels did not comply with basic standards, that authorities were signing off vessels without sighting pilot ladders, and certifying non-compliant arrangements. As these problems still continue today IMPA is currently running a [#DangerousLadders](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeSojRYYEDc&feature=emb_title) campaign to improve the safety of pilot transfer arrangements, and to spread awareness.

Ed: We can go into more detail on these concerns in future issues of the Marine Advocate.

Note:

Steve Cameron of CMR, provides a portfolio of 150 maritime experts for risk and safety consultancy, incident investigations, and experts for dispute resolution.

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