

Title: Safe Marine Pilot Transfer (MPT) Arrangement - Pilot Ladder

Reference: SOLAS Chapter V Reg.23
ISO 799-1:2019 (as amended) – Design and specification
ISO 799-2:2021 (as amended) – Maintenance, use, survey, and inspection
ISO 799-3:2022 (as amended) – Attachments and associated equipment
AMSA Marine Notice – Pilot Transfer Arrangements (04/2023), as amended
ARCSOPT Marine Pilot Transfer Arrangements – 03/2023, as amended

Scope: Vessel Masters and Operators – All commercial vessels arriving and departing in New South Wales ports.

Background

The substandard condition of the pilot ladders and their associated equipment, inadequate maintenance regimes, incorrect rigging, and a lack of awareness have been established as the major contributors to several significant incidents during pilot transfers.

To address the potential risks and the safety concerns surrounding the marine pilot transfers and to facilitate a standardised approach to marine pilot transfer arrangements, the Port Authority of New South Wales has mandated the following minimum safety criteria, which would come into force on **10 January 2026**.

Minimum Safety Criteria

- 1) The pilot ladders **shall comply** with the **ISO Standard 799-1:2019** (as amended) and shall be certified by the manufacturer accordingly.
- 2) **Maximum permissible age of pilot ladders – 30 months from the date of manufacture** unless the ladder has been subjected to the ladder and step attachment strength test (as prescribed in ISO 799-1:2019) at not more than 30-month intervals.
- 3) **Maximum permissible age of the manropes** Grade 1 manila rope, diameter 28~32 mm) to be used with pilot ladders – **12 months from the date of manufacture**.
- 4) Vessel operators to provide ship-specific guidance to the vessel's crew on:
 - a. Storage, care, inspection and maintenance of the pilot ladders, manropes, and all the other associated equipment including combination (pilot assist) ladders.
 - b. Rigging and securing of the pilot ladders and combination ladder arrangement, the acceptable securing method for pilot ladders mounted on reels, acceptable material, and sizes for securing ropes.
- 5) All Pilot ladders, manropes and associated equipment are to be used exclusively for marine transfers and to be marked as 'For Marine Transfers only'.
- 6) Original certificates issued by the certifying authority for all the pilot ladders, manropes, securing and lifting arrangements to be retained onboard.

This Harbour Master Instruction will supersede HMI 003-2023 on **10 January 2026**.

Any questions regarding this Harbour Master Instruction should be addressed to the [Harbour Master Team](#).

For a list of Harbour Master Instructions currently in force, please see:

[Sydney Harbour Master's Instructions | Port Authority of NSW](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Will pilot ladders complying with the other standards be acceptable?

No, as part of our commitment to continually improve our safety standards and voluntary early adoption of the performance standards for the pilot transfer arrangements, **we will only accept the pilot ladders complying with the requirements if ISO 799-1:2019 (as amended).**

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

Yes, the pilot ladder can be used after 30 months from the date of manufacture if it passes a ladder and step attachment strength test as per ISO -799-1:2019 (as amended).

Who can carry out the ladder and step attachment strength test?

The ladder and step attachment strength test must be carried out by the manufacturer or at a facility approved by the manufacturer or the vessel's Flag State or a Classification Society.

What is the validity of the ladder and step attachment strength test?

The ladder and step attachment strength test must be carried out at intervals not exceeding 30 months. The pilot ladder will be considered unacceptable if the ladder and step attachment strength test is older than 30 months.

Can the vessel crew carry out repairs to the pilot ladder?

Pilot ladder repairs must only be carried out by the manufacturer or at a manufacturer-approved repair facility, or a facility approved by the flag state or a classification society.

Can an exemption be given for the use of manropes older than 12 months from the date of manufacture?

The man ropes must be replaced before 12 months from the date of manufacture. Use of man ropes 12 months after the date of manufacture is not permitted.

If the vessel carries out marine pilot transfer by helicopter, is a compliant pilot ladder still required?

Marine pilot transfers can be carried out by pilot boat or helicopter, as per operational requirements, and the method of pilot boarding can change at short notice. Therefore, all vessels are required to comply with this Harbour Master Instruction.