

## FLYER TO THE YACHTING INDUSTRY (02/2025)

### Pilot Boarding Arrangements

**Pilot boarding arrangements** for pleasure yachts are coming under increased scrutiny.

SOLAS V/23 – ‘Pilot Transfer Arrangements’ applies to **ALL** “ships engaged on voyages in the course of which pilots may be employed.” This includes vessels not subject to ‘SOLAS surveys’, such as pleasure yachts not engaged in trade (i.e. pleasure yachts in private use).

A pilot may refuse boarding, thus preventing the vessel’s entry into port, and the Port State authority may take enforcement action (i.e. a detention or fine). The most common criteria for compulsory pilotage is >500 GT or >70 metres LOA, but it may be as low as 300GT or 30m LOA in some ports.

This Administration has received communications from pilots and Port States highlighting their concerns surrounding potentially dangerous arrangements on yachts. As such, in 2024 we undertook an enhanced inspection campaign of pilot boarding arrangements of Cayman flagged yachts, both commercial and private.

The International Maritime Pilot’s Association (IMPA) [2024 Safety Campaign Results](#) only 7 superyachts but of this small sample 50% were non-compliant with the regulations and/or the current IMPA ‘[Pilot Ladder Poster](#)’.

Additionally, SuperyachtNews in collaboration with CHIRP Maritime have been raising awareness; see <https://www.superyachtnews.com/operations/chirp-report-unsafe-pilot-transfer-arrangements>

Common issues with yachts include: -

1. Pilot ladder rigged from the deckhead.
2. No vertical hand holds.
3. Rubbing rail obstructions preventing the ladder steps from resting firmly against the ship’s side.
4. Pilot boarding stations not within the parallel body length of the ship.
5. Fittings not appropriately approved and tested, or unapproved modifications being made to ladders.
6. No suitable means available to adjust ladder length.

In December 2024, IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) at its 109th session approved draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 on *Pilot Transfer Arrangements* and the associated draft resolution on performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements. It is expected that these will be adopted at MSC 110 (June 2025) with an entry into force date of 1 January 2028. Some key amendments are that the rigging of the pilot ladder from the deckhead is specifically identified as not being permitted, the securing arrangements will have to meet a higher breaking load, and any means of securing a pilot ladder at intermediate lengths is to be type approved.

Following consultation with the UK Maritime Pilots Association, alternative arrangements for vessels less than 500GT were incorporated in the new revision of the [Red Ensign Group \(REG\) Yacht Code 2024](#) but these only effect the provision of ‘manropes’ and the required length of the ladder. For vessels being built under Cayman Registry supervision for compliance with the REG Yacht Code, designers/builders will be required to submit their Pilot Boarding Arrangements for review to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

Owners and operators of existing vessels, including those that are not certified in compliance with the REG Yacht Code or previous iterations, should check that their arrangements are in closest possible compliance,

primarily to ensure the safety of pilots but also to mitigate the risk of a pilot refusing to board and local authorities taking enforcement action.

Any questions or queries should be sent to [technical@cishipping.com](mailto:technical@cishipping.com).

Typical examples of deficiencies



Improper securing of pilot ladders to handrails or fender saddles, no vertical handholds



Pilot ladder secured to deckhead (prohibited from 01.01.2028), no vertical handholds, rubbing rail obstruction (albeit relatively minor in this instance)