

KISH P & I LOSS PREVENTION CIRCULAR KPI-LP-77-2012
(Falling overboard while preparing pilot ladder & lessons learnt)

► **The Incident:**

As per the released investigation report; on 17 November 2011, a wave knocked a seaman off the Container ship accommodation ladder while he was rigging a combination pilot ladder in preparation to embark a harbour pilot. The ship was near Rottnest Island off the port of Fremantle (Australia).

An immediate search for the seaman was initiated by Australian search and rescue agencies but the search was unsuccessful.

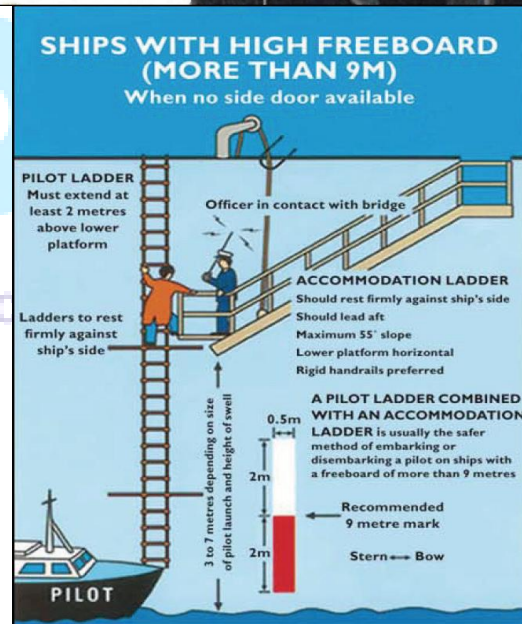
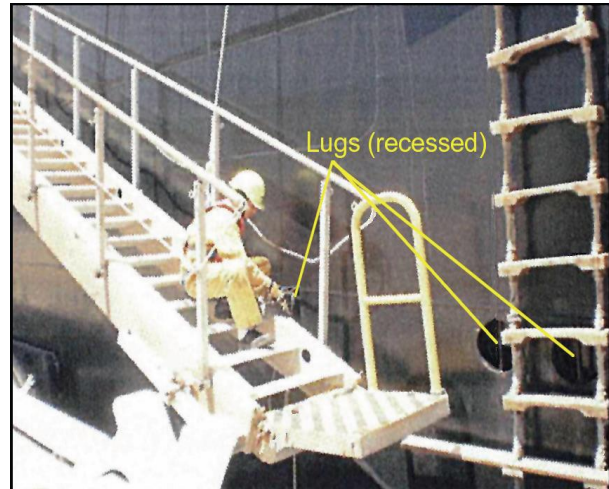
► **What was found:**

The investigation found that a risk assessment for the task of rigging the pilot ladder was not undertaken and a number of precautions, including taking into account the poor weather conditions, were not considered. With regard to this task, the ship's safety management system was not effectively implemented and documented procedures, including issuing a work permit, were not followed.

► **Related info:**

Pilots embarking or disembarking a ship using a pilot boat do so by means of a pilot ladder because it is safer and easier to transfer between the boat and a relatively light and flexible pilot ladder than directly to/from a rigid and heavy accommodation ladder.

If a ship's freeboard is more than 9 m, a combination pilot ladder (refer to the figure) is required. Even with freeboards less than 9 m, combination ladders are often used because they are considered safer. However, since rigging a combination ladder involves working over the side, there is a higher risk of a crew member falling overboard while rigging it.



► **Contributing factors:**

- On or before the accident day, a risk assessment for the task of rigging Container ship's combination pilot ladder was not carried out. Consequently, the weather conditions, safety harness tethering,

wearing of a lifejacket and communication were amongst the factors that were not properly considered before the crew started rigging the ladder.

- Container ship's safety management system procedure for working over the side required that a risk assessment be carried out, and necessary checks and precautions documented in a work permit. However, the procedure had not been effectively implemented on board the ship. [Significant safety issue]
- Container ship's permit to work over the side and the associated procedure required that the ship not be underway when working over the side. However, this requirement could not be complied with when working over the side to rig a combination pilot ladder.

► **What was initiated after the incident & industry's lessons learnt:**

- ✓ The company's shipboard Safety Management System procedure for its work permit system has undergone major revision with regard to work over the side and a new, improved work permit form has been introduced. Importantly, the revised work permit system procedure specifically identifies the task of working on combination pilot ladders, including the applicable work permit form and risk assessment. The procedure describes task specific precautions associated with the weather conditions, safety harnesses, fall arrest devices, inflatable buoyancy aids, communication and other factors.
- ✓ Personnel familiarisation procedures, particularly for ships new to the company fleet, have been enhanced to support implementation

of the revised work permit system procedure.

- ✓ A pre-assignment crew induction programme has been launched at company and manning agent offices. The program introduced the issue of personal pocket safety booklets, enhanced safe work practice presentations and safety equipment demonstrations related to work permits.
- ✓ On board training has been improved through safety videos and computer based training focusing on permit to work systems.
- ✓ A fleet-wide safety campaign was carried out to promote the company's work permit system.
- ✓ A requirement to report all work for which a permit is necessary to the company and submit the permit forms has been introduced.
- ✓ The company also obtained independent advice with regard to rigging pilot ladders. Based on that advice, the company considers that if pilotage services have not been suspended due to the weather conditions, rigging a pilot ladder may be permissible subject to the master's overriding authority and judgment on safety matters.

"The message: Rigging a pilot ladder while working over the side of a ship can be a hazardous task and it is imperative that all the precautions necessary to prevent a person falling overboard are taken"