

Isle of Man Ship Registry Technical Advisory Notice



Pilot Transfer Arrangements

Ref. TAN 004-26
Issued: 13/08/2026

1. Background

This notice is to advise clients of significant amendments to SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 23 (Resolution MSC.572(110)) along with an associated set of Mandatory Performance Standards for Pilot Transfer Arrangements (Resolution MSC.576(110)).

Historically, much of the technical design and operational detail for pilot ladders relied on non-mandatory guidelines (such as Resolution A.1045(27) and MSC.1/Circ.1428). Under the forthcoming amendments to SOLAS Chapter V, detailed design, manufacturing, inspection, maintenance, and operational rules will become mandatory. The purpose of this Technical Advisory Notice (TAN) is to inform relevant parties of the key requirements, implementation dates, and required actions to ensure compliance.

2. Application

This Notice applies to all Isle of Man registered vessels on which pilots may be employed. This includes commercial yachts. Please see MSN 054 for further guidance on pilot boarding arrangements on commercial yachts.

The new requirements apply to pilot transfer arrangements already installed on ships in operation.

Operators should be aware that MSC.572(110) instructs pilots to refuse boarding to any vessel which they suspect is non-compliant with the new requirements.

3. Implementation Timelines

1 January 2028: New requirements enter into force for all **new** installations; and **all vessels** must comply with Parts D & E of MSC.576(110) regarding inspection, maintenance, replacement, spare parts, and crew familiarization

1 January 2029: For **ships subject to SOLAS Chapter I** - Existing pilot transfer arrangements (i.e. those installed prior to 1.1.2028) must be verified for full compliance with MSC.576(110) no later than the vessel's first annual, intermediate or renewal survey on or after 1.1.2029

1 January 2030: For **ships not subject to SOLAS Chapter I** - Existing pilot transfer arrangements (i.e. those installed prior to 1.1.2028) must be verified for full compliance with MSC.576(110) no later than the vessel's first annual, intermediate or renewal survey on or 1.1.2030.

4. Key Requirements

Design, Construction & Equipment

- **Ban on Mechanical Hoists:** Mechanical pilot hoists are prohibited and must be removed from service.
- **Approval & Certification:** Pilot ladders, manropes, and intermediate length securing devices must be type-approved by the vessel's Recognized Organization in accordance with Part F of MSC.576(110). Standardized entries will be added to statutory Certificates/Records of Equipment (Forms P, C, E).



- **Securing Points & Deck Modifications:** Deck securing points for pilot ladders must be engineered to a minimum breaking strength of not less than 48 kN and a clear deck space measuring at least 915 mm × 915 mm must be provided at the deck access point.
- **Winch Reels:** Ladder winch reels cannot bear the load during transfer. The ladder must be secured directly to deck strong points. Clear deck space dimensions around winches are now strictly defined.
- **Deck Lighting:** Targeted, dedicated overside lighting (either fixed or portable) must illuminate both the transfer area and the deck access point, with secure mounting provisions for portable lighting.

Maintenance, Replacement & Operations

- **Maximum Service Life:** Pilot ladders and manropes, including their spares, must be removed from service within 36 months from manufacture or 30 months from date of first service, whichever occurs first.
- **Onboard Step Repairs:** Repairing or replacing individual ladder steps or spreader steps is prohibited; damaged ladders must be fully replaced.
- **Spares:** Vessels must carry at least one compliant spare pilot ladder and one spare set of manropes on board.
- **Inspection & SMS:** Pre-use, post-use, and 3-monthly formal inspections are required, which are recommended to be integrated into the vessel's Safety Management System (SMS).
- **Right of Refusal:** Pilot transfer personnel explicitly retain the legal authority to refuse non-compliant or unsafe transfer arrangements.

Recommended Actions

- Review existing onboard arrangements against MSC.576(110) immediately so that any required modifications can be undertaken in advance of the 2029/2030 deadlines.
- Update onboard PMS and SMS procedures for ladder logging, 30/36-month retirement tracking, and crew familiarization ahead of 1 January 2028.
- For loose gear, owners should have in place type-approved ladders and manropes prior to 1 January 2028.
- For fixed arrangements, owners must contact their Recognized Organization (RO) early to review existing deck plans, confirm structural strength, and obtain Part F re-approval for fixed deck arrangements no later than the vessel's first survey on or after 1 January 2029 (or 2030).

5. Additional Guidance

Global safety data continues to demonstrate the substantial risks associated with pilot boarding arrangements. Annual safety surveys by the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA) reveal non-compliance with safety regulations at rates of around 15%, with incorrect ladder rigging, degraded side ropes, and defective steps accounting for the vast majority of reported issues. In addition to SOLAS requirements, shipowners, Masters, and crew are therefore strongly urged to review the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWOP) regarding Boarding Arrangements (Chapter 22). In accordance with MSN 077, carriage of the latest version of COSWOP is mandatory on Isle of Man ships.

Please note - The Isle of Man Ship Registry cannot give legal advice. Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel. You should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

