ADOPTED 2028 LIFE-SAVING

Pilot ladders and transfer arrangements: the new SOLAS V/23 from 2028

New performance standards, a fixed service life for every pilot ladder, and the dates existing ships have to meet.

ISSUED	APPLIES TO	REFERENCE
September 2026	Pilot ladders, manropes, securing points, combination arrangements	SOLAS V/23 · Res. MSC.572(110) · Res. MSC.576(110)

AT A GLANCE

- Resolution MSC.572(110) amends SOLAS V/23 and MSC.576(110) adds mandatory performance standards, both in force 1 January 2028.
- Arrangements installed on or after 1 January 2028 comply at installation; existing arrangements on SOLAS ships by the first survey on or after 1 January 2029.
- Pilot ladders and manropes come out of service 36 months after manufacture or 30 months after being placed in service, whichever comes first.
- No step repairs on board, a spare ladder and manropes carried, mechanical pilot hoists prohibited.

01 Why the rule changed

Defective pilot boarding arrangements have been raised for years by pilot organisations and port state control. MSC 110 in June 2025 answered with a rewritten regulation V/23 and, for the first time, mandatory performance standards covering design, manufacture, inspection, stowage, maintenance, replacement and familiarisation.

SHIP	MUST COMPLY
Arrangements installed on or after 1 January 2028	At installation
Existing arrangements, SOLAS ships	First survey on or after 1 January 2029
Existing arrangements, other ships	1 January 2030

MSC.1/Circ.1690 encourages voluntary early implementation.

02 The pilot ladder becomes a consumable

> **Service life.** A pilot ladder and its manropes are removed from service no later than 36 months after the date of manufacture, or 30 months after being placed into service, whichever comes first.

Repair or replacement of steps or spreader steps on board is no longer permitted; a damaged ladder is replaced as a unit. At least one spare compliant pilot ladder and one spare set of manropes are carried. Pilot ladders, securing means and manropes are approved by the Administration.

03 Other changes on deck

ITEM	REQUIREMENT
Mechanical pilot hoists	Prohibited
Height of climb	Pilot ladder alone between 1.5 m and 9 m. Above 9 m, a combination arrangement with the accommodation ladder
Securing points	Strong points, shackles and securing ropes with a minimum breaking strength of 48 kN; means of securing the ladder at intermediate length
Lighting	Adequate lighting of all overside transfer arrangements and deck embarkation points
Inspection	Before and after each use, and a detailed inspection every three months, recorded under the SMS
Familiarisation	Crew who inspect, maintain, rig or operate the arrangement are familiarised

04 Working out the replacement date

Two clocks run on every ladder, and the earlier one decides. A ladder that sits in the store before use loses service time before it is ever rigged.

LADDER	MANUFACTURED	IN SERVICE	36 MONTHS FROM MANUFACTURE	30 MONTHS IN SERVICE	REMOVE BY
A	March 2028	April 2028	March 2031	October 2030	**October 2030**
B	March 2028	January 2029	March 2031	July 2031	**March 2031**
Spare	June 2028	In store	June 2031	Not started	**June 2031**

For a fleet, the replacement cycle is roughly every two and a half to three years per ladder plus the spare. Ordering against each ship’s port calls avoids a delay at the pilot station.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- Record manufacture and in-service dates of every pilot ladder and set of manropes.
- Plan replacements so no ladder passes either limit.
- Make sure each ship carries a spare compliant ladder and manropes.
- Check strong points, securing ropes, lighting, and update the SMS inspection routine.

HOW OZ MARITIME CAN HELP

- Pilot ladders and manropes with maker documentation, from stock
- Replacement planning by manufacture date across the fleet
- Spare ladders delivered with the service attendance
- Embarkation ladders and related equipment on the same requisition

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SOURCES

- IMO Res. MSC.572(110), amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23
- IMO Res. MSC.576(110), Performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements
- IMO MSC.1/Circ.1690; MSC.1/Circ.1428/Rev.1
- ABS, SOLAS pilot transfer arrangements
- Cyprus Shipping Deputy Ministry, Guide and FAQ on SOLAS V/23 (April 2026)
- UK P&I Club, Enhancing the safety of pilot transfer arrangements

This bulletin summarises the requirements as we read them on the date of issue. It is general technical information, not legal advice, and does not replace the text of the instruments, your flag Administration's notices, your classification society's rules or the equipment maker's instructions, which take precedence for your vessel. Check your flag, not a general claim.