



**Marine Notice 4/2010  
Supersedes 28/2007**

## **Construction, Inspection and Maintenance of Accommodation Ladders and Gangways**

This Marine Notice is issued to remind persons in the maritime industry including shipowners, shipbuilders, surveyors, marine pilots, ships' personnel and stevedores of the need to inspect and maintain ships accommodation ladders in order to ensure that a safe working environment is provided. It has the further purpose of drawing attention to recent amendments to SOLAS Chapter II, together with the associated IMO guidelines, on this subject.

There have been incidents involving accommodation ladders on ships in Australian ports that have had the potential to cause serious injury or fatality. Investigations into these incidents have shown that lack of maintenance of fall wires and turntable arrangements were a primary cause.

Modern accommodation ladders are generally lightweight structures, and as such require constant maintenance to ensure they provide a safe and reliable access to and from a ship.

Ship operators have an obligation under the ISM Code to identify equipment where sudden operational failure could cause hazardous situations and take steps to minimise this likelihood. Clearly, accommodation ladders fall into this category. However, indications are that many ships have no requirements established within the framework of their Safety Management Systems to ensure:

- i. the accommodation ladder, its fittings and associated equipment are properly inspected and maintained as required; and

- ii. the crew inspect accommodation ladder falls at regular intervals, (and replace as necessary to ensure the wires remain in a satisfactory condition, and are suitable for the task).

In order to reduce the risk of accidents arising out of the use of accommodation ladders, ship's masters and operators should incorporate and implement appropriate procedures in the ship's Safety Management System.

International requirements on this subject were introduced for the first time in SOLAS regulation II-1/3-9 that was adopted by IMO in May 2008 and entered force on 1 January 2010. The new regulation is given effect in Australia through Marine Orders Part 12 – Construction - Subdivision and Stability, Machinery and Electrical Installations. Additionally, Marine Orders Part 21 – Safety of Navigation and Emergency Procedures requires that the master provide a safe access to a ship in port, which includes the requirement that the crew properly maintain the access, and that it is fit for its intended use.

The SOLAS regulation is supplemented by the guidelines contained in IMO document MSC.1/Circ.1331 *Guidelines for construction, installation, maintenance and inspection/survey of means of embarkation and disembarkation*, copies of which may be obtained from AMSA.

The construction requirements of the new regulation, which apply only to **new ships** and are outlined in the guidelines, are largely reflective of existing industry and ISO standards.

However, the final paragraph of the regulation applies to **existing ships as well as new ships** and requires the means of embarkation and disembarkation to be inspected and maintained in suitable condition for their intended purpose as outlined in the guidelines. Wires used to support accommodation ladders and gangways are required to be maintained in accordance with the SOLAS standards for lifeboat falls.

During any flag State control or port State control inspection AMSA surveyors may ask to see relevant procedures and records relating to accommodation ladder construction, inspection and maintenance, may inspect relevant hardware and may institute measures to rectify any deficiencies.

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