



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Safety Alert 14-18

Don't forget about Gangways and Ladders! Pilot dies in gangway accident.

Recently, a vessel pilot died while boarding a vessel when its gangway separated from the vessel, causing two persons to fall into the water. Although the investigation is still underway and additional facts are being gathered, this casualty serves as another reminder that shipboard equipment that seems quite benign can quickly become a hazard to persons boarding and departing a vessel.

Commercial vessels can present hazards to mariners onboard if the risks are not recognized and mitigated. Considering the hazards presented by rotating machinery, electrical systems, potential fire, severe weather, etc.; one could easily underappreciate the risk that a simple gangway presents, leading mariners to become complacent. Because of injuries and fatalities on gangways, a number of organizations have developed gangway safety standards, requirements, and best practices.

The [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#)¹, [International Maritime Organization](#)², [Principle and Indemnity Clubs](#),³ [Owners and Operators](#)⁴, and [others](#)⁵ have put forth various requirements and shared best practices to improve gangway safety.

Because of this recent fatality, the Coast Guard **strongly recommends**:

- Owners and Operators, Captains and Mates review and implement the best practices as presented in the links above and comply with all the regulations applicable to your vessel.
- For vessel pilots, crews, vendors, or anyone boarding or departing a vessel, condition yourself to take a moment to examine the gangway, accommodation or pilot ladder. Look for potential hazards or deficiencies, and report them to senior personnel on board the vessel.

***At all times, if there is any question about the safety of a gangway, DO NOT CROSS IT.
Do not assume that any gangway crossing is "routine."***

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¹ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/29/1915.74>

² https://puc.overheid.nl/hsi/doc/PUC_2184_14/1/#content_document

³ <https://www.westpandi.com/globalassets/loss-prevention/loss-prevention-bulletins/west-of-england---loss-prevention-bulletin---gangways-and-accommodation-ladders.pdf>

⁴ <https://newsstand.joomag.com/en/step-change-for-safety-global-sharing-sep-2013-pilot-ladders/0099601001379318571>

⁵ <https://www.marineinsight.com/guidelines/accommodation-ladder-on-ships-requirements-operations-and-maintenance/>