
Manning of Pilot Boats

Notice to Competent Harbour Authorities, Pilots and Pilot Boat Crews

This Note replaces Merchant Shipping Notice No. M1473

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Following the death of a pilot in July 1990, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) recommended that all pilot boats should be manned with a minimum of two crew including the coxswain. The MAIB further recommended that the competent harbour authorities should ensure that all the crew members of their pilot launches attend a first aid course and that it should be the policy of these authorities that the crew should carry out man-overboard retrieval exercises at regular intervals. The Department of Transport accepted these recommendations and issued the following guidance which still stands:

1.2 Manning

1.2.1 Every pilot boat shall be manned by a minimum of two adult persons, namely a coxswain and a deckhand who can assist the pilot when boarding or landing. The competent harbour authority or owner of the boat shall be satisfied as to the competence and fitness for duty of these persons.

1.2.2 A second crew member on a pilot boat is essential for observing the pilot and the pilot ladder:

- a) when the pilot boat comes alongside the ship;
- b) at the time the pilot transfers between the pilot boat and the pilot ladder; and
- c) when the pilot boat departs from alongside the ship.

A second crew member is vital if there is a need to recover the pilot from the water.

1.2.3 All pilot boat crew members shall:-

- (a) hold a Marine Safety Agency (MSA) First Aid at Sea certificate; or
- (b) hold a First Aid certificate issued in accordance with Regulation 3(2) of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 (SI.1981/917); or
- (c) have received training in emergency first aid in accordance with Regulation 3(2) of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 (SI.1981/917), as described in paragraphs 48 and 58 under Regulation 3(2) of the Health and Safety Commission publication "First aid at work - The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 - Approved Code of Practice and Guidance" (ISBN 0 7176 1050 0).

1.3 Man-Overboard Retrieval

1.3.1 Competent harbour authorities should require man-overboard retrieval exercises to be conducted by each pilot boat crew at intervals of not more than six months.

2.0 Further Recommendations

2.1 Following the death of a crew member of a pilot boat in June 1996, the MAIB recommended that the Marine Safety Agency review the adequacy of the man-overboard retrieval system carried on board the vessel.

2.2 The MSA, having reviewed the system, considers that the possibility of having to retrieve a **crew** member who has fallen overboard should be covered in the periodic exercises referred to in paragraph 1.3.1 above.

2.3 In addition, the retrieval procedure should be covered in the functional tests of the retrieval equipment demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Certifying Authority which carries out the survey and issues the certificate for each pilot boat.

Where a vessel is normally manned by a helmsman and one crew member, the demonstration required by these functional tests should include retrieval of a **crew** member from the water. (In this demonstration, the crew member can be assumed to be conscious.) This demonstration should assume that the pilot boat is in the minimum manned condition ie with only the coxswain and deckhand on board, and that the deckhand falls overboard and has to be recovered.

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