



MEANS OF ACCESS

**Notice to all Shipowners, Operators and Managers and other employers of seafarers;
Masters, Officers and Seafarers**

*This notice should be read in conjunction with the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels
(Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 1997/2967).*

Summary

1. This Marine Guidance Note gives guidance on the measures that shipowners and employers are expected to take in order to provide a safe means of access on UK ships.
2. The Merchant Shipping (Means of Access) Regulations 1988 have been revoked, and this notice replaces the statutory duties in those Regulations.
3. Providing safe access to a ship is considered to be an integral part of ensuring a safe working environment on board, as required by the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997, regulation 5(2)(e).
4. MCA considers that compliance with this notice will generally demonstrate that the shipowner or employer has done what is reasonably practicable to comply with the duty to ensure a safe working environment on aboard ship. Where alternative measures are taken to provide safe means of access, the shipowner or employer will be expected to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, that these alternative measures provide at least an equivalent level of safety in the operating conditions concerned.
5. If the measures in this notice are not complied with, and no measures which MCA agrees are equivalent are in place, MCA will take enforcement action under the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997, as amended, place a duty on the shipowner and the employer to ensure the health and safety of seafarers, workers and other persons so far as is reasonably practicable. That duty extends to



provision and maintenance of an environment for persons aboard ship that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health.

1.2 Providing a safe means of access to the ship is considered to be an integral part of that duty. The duty is placed on the shipowner, the employer and any other person “in control of the matter”, which – in respect that the equipment provided is properly used - will include the master.

1.3 In this notice, any reference to “access” means embarking on or disembarking from a ship.

2. Basic requirements

2.1 In order to ensure the safety of those leaving or joining the ship, a safe means of access is required between the ship and any quay, pontoon, other structure, or another ship alongside which the ship is secured. The master is responsible for ensuring that a safe means of access is provided, even if the equipment is provided from the shore-side.

2.2 The equipment used to provide a safe means of access should be placed in position promptly after the ship has been secured and should remain in position for as long as the ship remains alongside.

2.3 Access equipment when in use should be properly rigged, secured, deployed and safe to use. It should be adjusted as necessary from time to time to maintain safe access.

2.4 The means of access and immediate approaches should be adequately illuminated – see section of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

2.5 Equipment used for access, and any safety net should be of good construction, of sound material, of adequate strength for the purposes for which it is used, free from patent defect and properly maintained.

2.6 A lifebuoy with a self-activating light and safety line attached to a quoit or similar device should be provided ready for use at the point of access to the ship.

3. Gangways

3.1 A gangway should be carried on every ship of 30 metres or more registered length (or overall length, if the ship is not registered). The gangway should be appropriate to the deck layout, size, shape and maximum freeboard of the ship.

3.2 Further guidance is in Annex 18.1 and Annex 18.2. of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

4. Accommodation Ladders

4.1 An accommodation ladder should be carried on every ship of 120 metres or more registered length (or overall length, if the ship is not registered). The accommodation ladder should be appropriate to the deck layout, size, shape and maximum freeboard of the ship.

4.2 Further guidance is in Annex 18.1. and Annex 18.2. of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

5. Portable and Rope Ladders

5.1 Portable ladders should only be used as a last resort, where no safer means of access is reasonably practicable. Further guidance is in Annex 18.1. of the Code of Safe Working



Practices for Merchant Seamen.

5.2 A rope ladder should only be used for the purpose of access between a ship with high freeboard and a ship with low freeboard or between a ship and a boat, and only if no safer means of access is reasonably practicable.

5.3 Further guidance is in Annex 18.1. of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

6. Safety nets

6.1 An adequate number of safety nets should be carried on board the ship, or otherwise be readily available for use. When access equipment is in use, and there is a risk of a person falling from that equipment, or from the ship or from the quayside, a safety net should be mounted in order to minimise the risk of injury.

6.2 Further guidance is in Section 18.5 of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.

7. Duty of workers

7.1 The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997 require workers to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others on board the ship who may be affected by their acts and omissions. In particular, they must co-operate with the Company or the employer or other person to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

7.2 A worker must therefore make use of any means of access provided for their use in accordance with these regulations, and any instructions or guidance as to its safe use.

8. Other guidance

8.1 Section 6.1 and Section 18.1 of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen contains further guidance, including on maintenance of equipment for means of access, and alternative boarding arrangements when those described above are not practicable. Where alternative measures are used, a risk assessment must be carried out and suitable protective measures be put in place, including use of Personal Protective Equipment if there are risks which cannot be avoided by collective means.

8.2 MGN 337(M+F) provides guidance on safe access for fishing vessels and other small vessels.

8.3 There are separate legislative requirements for the transfer of pilots in SOLAS Chapter V regulation 23. These are implemented for UK ships by the Merchant Shipping (Safety of Navigation) Regulations 2002.

8.4 MSC.1/Circ.1331 – Guidelines for the construction, installation, maintenance and inspection/survey of means of embarkation and disembarkation – provides specific guidance for accommodation ladders and gangways required under SOLAS Regulation II1/3-9.



More Information

Seafarer Safety and Health Branch
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Bay 2/19
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton SO15
1EG

Tel : +44 (0) 23 8032 9328
Fax : +44 (0) 23 8032 9251
e-mail: mlc@mcga.gov.uk

General Inquiries: infoline@mcga.gov.uk

MCA Website Address: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

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