



The Swedish Club

MONTHLY SAFETY SCENARIO

AUGUST 2022

Pilot ladder in poor condition

It was a winter morning with calm winds and no swell. The vessel had departed port and was preparing for the pilot to disembark. The Chief Officer had told the bosun to prepare the ladder on the port side. The vessel had discharged all its cargo and was in ballast condition proceeding to the next port for loading. As the vessel had no cargo onboard the freeboard was about 7 meters.

When the bosun had secured the pilot ladder he called the Chief Officer on the radio and told him all was ready for the pilot.

A couple of days before, the safety Officer had done the monthly inspection of the safety equipment and had reported that the pilot ladder was in good, clean condition. The ladder had a four-year old certificate of conformity that was still valid.

To make it easier for the pilot boat to approach the vessel the Master made a small alteration to give the pilot lee from the wind. On the bridge the pilot put on his lifejacket and was escorted by the Chief Officer to the main deck. When the vessel had completed the alteration the pilot boat approached the vessel and the pilot started to climb down the ladder.



After a couple of steps one of the side ropes broke as it was rotten and the ladder swung heavily forward and aft. This caused the pilot to lose his grip and fall. He fell five meters into the water.

At this time the vessel had a speed of about 2 knots. The Chief Officer told the Master over the radio that the pilot had fallen into the water. The Master immediately stopped the propeller pitch.

A couple of minutes later the pilot boat managed to lift the pilot onboard. He was conscious but was shocked and cold from the 6 degree water. The pilot was taken to hospital but there were no serious injuries. It is important to understand that a certificate of conformity only confirms that the ladder has been manufactured as per requirements.

It is important that pilot ladders are not tampered with, that they are inspected correctly, that tape is not used which can hide the condition of the ladder and trap moisture.



Questions

When discussing this case please consider that the actions taken at the time made sense for all involved. Do not only judge but also ask why you think these actions were taken and could this happen on your vessel?

1. What were the immediate causes of this accident?
2. Is there a risk that this kind of accident could happen on our vessel?
3. How could this accident have been prevented?
4. What sections of our SMS were breached if any?
5. Is our SMS sufficient to prevent this accident?
6. Do our procedures comply with the Codes of Safe Working Practices?
7. If procedures were breached, why do you think this was the case?
8. When the pilot ladder is inspected, how is this completed? Is it just an ocular inspection or a more thorough inspection of all critical parts?
9. Are our pilot ladders stored in a dry and clean environment?
10. Do we have a risk assessment onboard that addresses these risks?
11. Do we correct an identified issue with any safety equipment or breach of safety procedures immediately?
12. Is there any kind of training that we could do that addresses these issues?