

## SM STEAMSHIP MUTUAL

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## Reading Draught Marks when shore access is not possible

## February 2022

## To All Members

Reading Draught Marks when shore access is not possible

In recent weeks, there have been two reported fatalities of ships' officers when they were trying to take the draught readings of vessels during and upon completion of cargo operations. In one of these incidents the officer was denied permission to leave the vessel in order read the draught marks from ashore due to strict COVID-19 restrictions at the port. In the other case the reason for the attempt to read the draught from the vessel is not clear. In both instances a pilot ladder was used to view the draught marks. On both occasions the officers slipped from the ladder and fell into the sea and onto the dock respectively and with fatal consequences.

If, for whatever reason, it is not possible to access the shore to read a vessel's draught marks, safety should be the paramount concern when considering alternatives. Is it possible to arrange for someone ashore to



take the readings, and, if safe send photographs from a mobile phone, or could a boat be used to avoid the risks associated with putting a seafarer over the side of the vessel on a ladder? If the only feasible option is to use a ladder to enable draught marks to be viewed, a full risk assessment should be conducted with reference to the vessel's Safety Management System (SMS) before that operation is undertaken.

Crew members using a portable ladder for taking the draught readings should comply with the company's procedures for such activity. Full consideration should be given to the applicable weather conditions with the activity being properly supervised, appropriate work permits being issued, a personal flotation device (PFD) being worn, and crew to be dressed and equipped adequately and utilising where appropriate a suitably attached lifeline. Where the weather or environmental conditions pose a severe risk to the crew member the operation of reading the draughts should be delayed until conditions moderate, having due consideration to any potential requirement to fully suspended cargo operations.

The press articles reporting these incidents recount that in both cases the officers were using a pilot ladder from which to view the draught marks. Whilst it is not clear whether that terminology was intended to refer to the vessels' designated pilot ladder, it should be noted that the pilot ladder should only be used to embark or disembark a pilot and not for any other purpose.