Launches and Personnel Transfers — study guide

Moving people between ships, or between ship and shore, is routine and risky. This guide covers basket transfers, the banksman's role, communication and gangway checks.[1]

Basket transfers

Before any basket transfer operation, consider the amount of clear space between the embarkation point and the point of landing, the weather conditions, and the height of the transfer basket — minimising that height where possible.

Roles and communication

During lifting operations, the **Banksman** is responsible for instructing the Crane Operator. Radio communication should be established on an agreed **frequency** and maintained throughout the **transfer** operation, so orders are never mistaken.

Gangways

Before using a gangway to board a vessel, ask yourself: are the handrails intact and free from damage? Is the gangway wet and slippery? Is the angle too steep because of the tide? And is there a safety net strung under the gangway? A gangway that fails any of these checks is not safe to use.

Key facts to remember

- Basket transfer: check clear space, weather, and minimise basket height.
- The Banksman instructs the Crane Operator.
- Establish radio communication on an agreed frequency and keep it throughout the transfer.
- Gangway checks: handrails intact, not wet/slippery, angle not too steep (tide), safety net rigged underneath.

Sources

1. SOLAS and the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) — safe means of access, personnel transfer and lifting operations.

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