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“Tragedy Strikes as Maritime Pilot Dies in Pilot Transfer Accident”

It is with great sadness that we report the tragic death of Francesco Galia, a highly experienced UK Maritime Pilot, whilst transferring from a pilot transfer boat to a large ocean going vessel. We extend our deepest condolences to loved ones, friends and colleagues, and offer our support to all those affected by this terrible news.

The accident occurred on the 8th January 2023 in the Humber Estuary, the cause of which is as yet unknown and will take some while to be fully understood. The MAIB (Marine Accident Investigation Branch) has now opened a full investigation and will report in due course.

As a Pilot, Francesco Galia, was known for his passion for the maritime industry and his dedication to his job. His loss is all the more devastating as we understand that he was shortly to retire after many years of service in the maritime industry, with the last two decades as a Pilot.

This tragedy highlights the risks and challenges faced by Maritime Pilots every day they go to work. They are responsible for safely navigating ships in and out of ports and harbours, often under complex and hazardous conditions, transferring from one vessel to another by nothing more than a rope ladder. This is always a risky procedure.

The movement of the pilot boat bringing the Pilot alongside, the ship's motion, and the potential for equipment failure, requires precise timing and coordination of the ship, the pilot vessel and the exact judgment of the Pilot as they step from one moving platform to another moving platform, often in pitch darkness in the dead of night.

95% of all UK trade comes in and goes out by ship. Without the dedication of Maritime Pilots whose daily work keeps UK ports open, UK plc would grind to a halt in a matter of days.

We urge the maritime industry and regulatory authorities, once again, to prioritise safety and training with regard to the transfer of Pilots and crew, and to invest in safe and reliable technologies and procedures to ensure that our Maritime Pilots and seafarers return home safe after every voyage.

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