

UK HSE: Motion Compensated Gangways Auto-Retraction

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The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published [Safety Notice ED03-2025](#) relating to power failure or control system error can cause the unplanned retraction of motion compensated gangways (MCGs) posing a serious risk to operators and users of a gangway.

Target audience for the UK HSE Safety Notice ED03-2025 is Offshore Installation duty holders and vessel owners / operators of offshore vessels, windfarm operators, principal contractors and contractors.

Outline of the problem

There continues to be incidents where failure or error of a motion compensated gangway (MCG) power or control system has resulted in the gangway retracting without warning to the operator or persons crossing the gangway.

Unplanned retraction, also known as auto-retraction, poses a significant, foreseeable risk to personnel on the gangway if they are not given adequate warning to allow them to move to a safe location or brace for sudden movement, or allow sufficient time for the gangway operator to override the retraction.

Lack of warning that the gangway is about to retract can lead to people:

- falling onto the gangway
- being struck by moving parts
- falling from height resulting in serious injury or death.

A warning, by definition, is advanced notice that a potentially dangerous event is about to occur. The purpose of the warning is to enable persons to make themselves safe before the event occurs. Audible and/or visual alarms that are triggered at the same time the gangway retracts are not considered to provide adequate warning.

This issue was highlighted in [HSE Safety Notice ED02-2024 Risk of serious injury from motion compensated gangways](#), which states:

Operators, duty holders and vessel owners or operators should ensure that any gangway auto-retraction function provides suitable audible and visible warnings which allow users sufficient time to make themselves safe before the auto-retraction function activates.

Since the publication of ED02-2024, the output and conclusions of a good practice workshop conducted by G+/IMCA in partnership with Energy Institute has been published. It states Walk-to-Work (W2W) providers should provide an [auto] disconnect response that does not endanger the gangway user, with sufficient warnings and time.

DNV, as part of a joint industry project, produced industry guidance “Gangway Access to Offshore Facilities – Walk-to-Work” (PP097552 – Rev 1) states: there should be sufficient alarms (visual and/or audible) installed to inform the gangway personnel and personnel crossing the gangway, of the current status of the gangway system and to warn of imminent action, such as disconnection.

Despite the safety notice ED02-2024, and the publication of industry good practice, UK HSE has become aware that gangways that provide insufficient warning before auto-retraction are still being used in the offshore oil and gas and renewables industry.

Action required

Oil and gas and renewable energy duty holders must review their gangway arrangements to identify any gangways that do not provide sufficient warning prior to auto-retraction. If it is found that the gangway can retract without sufficient warning the gangway should not be used until suitable controls and additional risk reduction measures are in place.

Duty holders must review their gangway design, including the testing that has been carried out of all automatic functions. Duty holders should carry out a suitable and sufficient technical risk assessment to understand all operational states of the control system under which the gangway may auto-retract, including that the control system will only result in auto-retraction if personnel are not at risk.

Use of gangway operators to override auto-retractions should be rigorously risk assessed.

Although [Safety Notice ED03-2025](#) only applies to the jurisdiction of the UK, IMCA supports and strongly recommends similar actions are taken wherever motion compensated gangways are deployed worldwide.

IMCA Guidance References

IMCA has issued specific guidance related to this type of incident:

1. IMCA M 254 – Guidelines for walk to work operations
2. IMCA M 205 – Guidance on operational communications
3. IMCA M 202 – Guidance on the transfer of personnel to and from offshores vessels and structures

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