



Stowaways in South African Ports

Steamship Mutual's local correspondents in South Africa have issued an advisory note on the heightened threat of stowaways boarding vessels in South African ports. These attacks are reported to have increased significantly over the last two months. Ship Owners and crew are reminded to remain vigilant to the potential threat of Stowaways attempting to board vessels in port.

The current stance of the South African authorities is as follows:

Should any unlawful person gain access onto a ship in a South African port, the person will automatically be deemed to be a stowaway unless the vessel can provide photographic, video or 3rd party evidence (terminal security) that the stowaway attempted to board the vessel in Durban.

The ship owner will be considered liable for the full costs of repatriating the stowaway. It is essential therefore that the stowaway does not gain access onto the ship in any way.

As Christmas is approaching there is an expectation of a rise in stowaway cases as individuals look for free passage home.

Steamship Mutual's South Africa correspondents have advised that stowaway attacks often occur in the following situations:

- Late at night or early hours of the morning
- Attempting to disguise themselves as Stevedores by wearing stevedore clothing such as hardhats and reflective jackets.
- Wearing colours not easily seen at night.
- Climbing up mooring ropes and gangways, hiding in empty containers and log-ships.
- Mingling with groups of workers on a vessel to enable them to blend in.
- Bribing terminal security to enable them to get aboard vessel.
- Carrying provisions for part of the journey.



Example of a stowaway attempting to board a ship up the mooring lines.

The correspondents recommend that Ship Owners and crew should take the following measures:

- Consider employing private security to patrol the quayside. It is recommended that one security guard be positioned on the forward mooring lines and one on the stern lines. Security staff reminded to remain alert and vigilant at all hours of the day and night.
- Crew members should be stationed at the bottom of the gangway and check that every person boarding the vessel is in possession of a TNPA port permit.
- Crew must not allow anyone on board the ship who does not have a port permit.
- Every visitor should have ISPS clearance.
- All visitors should surrender their port permit to security upon boarding and they should collect the same when they leave the ship.
- Where somebody attempting to board the vessel does not have a port permit, the terminal/berth security must be contacted in order to verify the identity of the individual and determine why the individual does not have a TNPA port permit.



- Visitors to the vessel should be in possession of photographic identification.
- There are reports of cases where individuals have run past security at the top of the gangway. Ship staff must not allow individuals an opportunity to push past them on the gangway. Allowing an individual to cross the gangway is too late, local authorities will deem the individual to be a stowaway.
- Where possible the gangway should be raised and only lowered to allow a visitor to board after a crew member has verified, as outlined above, the authenticity of the visitor from the bottom of the gangway.

Steamship Mutual's previously issued Risk Alert on the threat of Stowaways in South Africa [is available here.](#)

In the event of any queries please contact Steamship Mutual's South Africa correspondent's office for advice and assistance on the following numbers.

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