Northern Harbors & Small Ports

Operation and Maintenance

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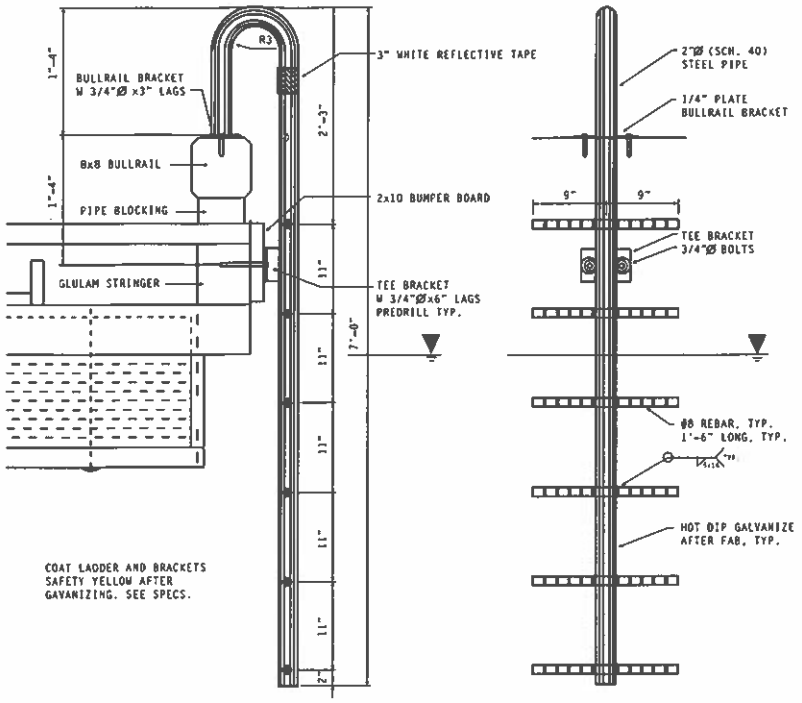
Water rescue equipment

Harbors are increasingly providing more equipment on their docks to help rescue a person who has fallen in the water. A traditional tool is the ring life buoy (RLB) with an attached line. RLBs should be installed in highly visible cabinets spaced about 75 feet apart. Another useful tool is called a throw bag. Throw bags contain between 40 and 60 feet of high-strength line that can be thrown easily to a person in the water. Harbor staff members who are given a little practice can consistently hit a target 40 feet away twice within 20 seconds. This performance is much better than can be accomplished with a ring life buoy.

Provide time for harbor staff to train with ring life buoys and throw bags every six months. This training improves the chance of a successful water rescue, and looks good on your OSHA safety training log. It also insures that equipment is occasionally removed

Safety ladder, installed according to Transpac Marinas mechanical drawing, in Valdez Harbor, Alaska.



This safety ladder is very effective for self-rescue of people who fall in the water. Floating docks have a freeboard height of over 16 inches, and they make it difficult to climb out of the water. These ladders can cost around $150 each, installed. Courtesy Transpac Marinas.

from its container, inspected, and used. Most coastal community fire departments have a dive or swift water rescue team that would likely enjoy training with the local harbor staff.

Safety ladders are becoming more popular in Alaska and along the Pacific Northwest coast. The design shown here, from Transpac Marinas, is very simple to build, easy to install, and works well.

Personal protective equipment

Harbor employees should always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) while on board skiffs or when conducting work that requires them to hang over a dock. Recent PFD designs are greatly improved, and many harbor employees routinely wear USCG approved float coats as a matter of course. Both the Stearns and