

# Special Safety Announcement

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## Life Rafts

I've been an advocate of Viking Life Rafts for some time, and especially since visiting one of their facilities in Norway a couple of years ago, I wrote about it here .

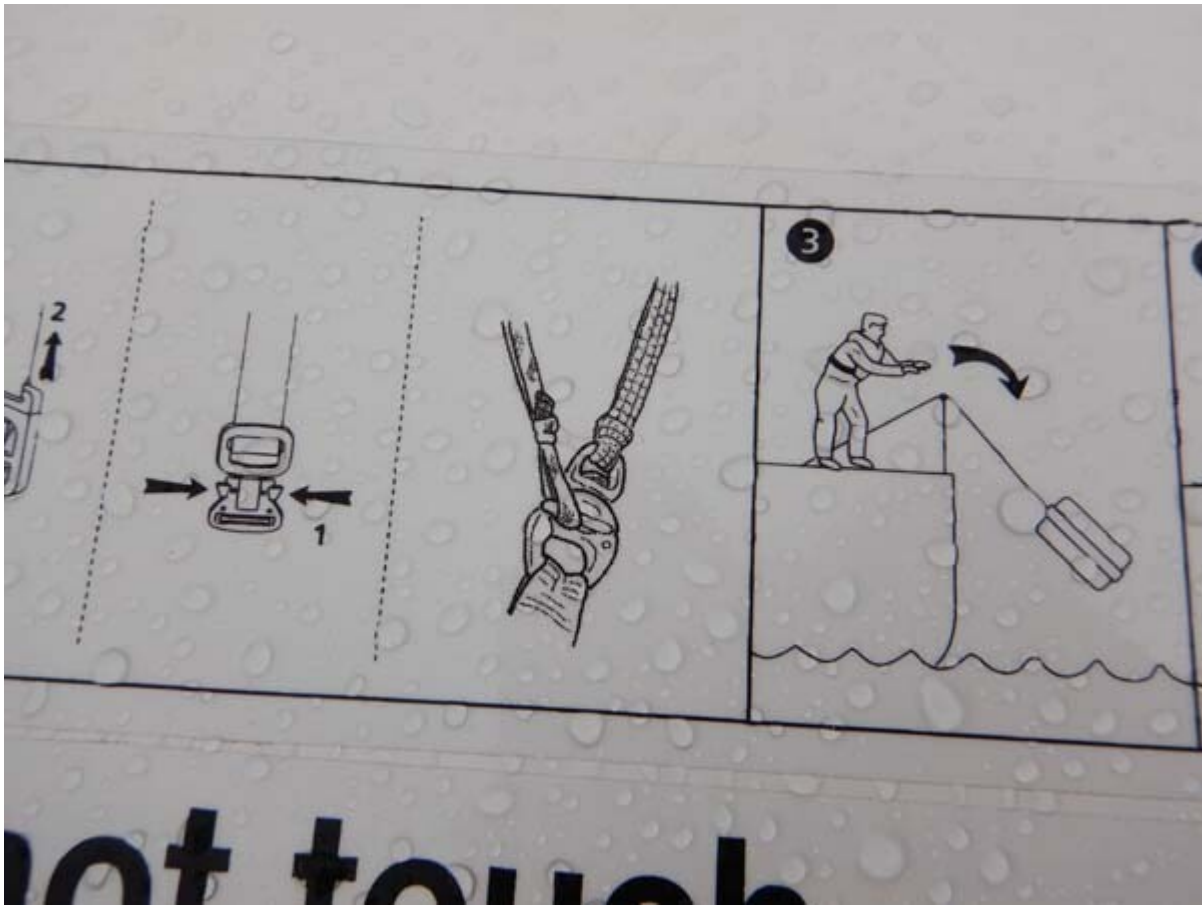
I encountered a scenario on a Viking raft installation recently, one that I thought I'd share with SDMC Marine Systems Excellence eMag readers. I'm not sure if this occurred at the factory, or during installation, either way it's worthy of attention.

The red ribbon on this manual release hook does nothing when pulled, it's simply tied around the hasp. You could pull on it all day long and it would not release the securing strap.





The actual release is the very small lanyard, with a fancy work pull. Someone who was unfamiliar with this system, and who looked at the pictogram instructions (which do not match the actual installation), may not be able to release the raft manually. Now, imagine the proverbial dark and stormy night, with a rolling, pitching deck, or flames licking at your heels in the event of a vessel fire, a crew member trying to release this may not be able to figure it out.



It looks as if the design has changed since the pictogram was created, where the red ribbon was the actual release lanyard.



Here's what it should look like (it still does not match the pictogram exactly, but it's similar). Note, the red ribbon is tied in such a way that its knot comes up short on the fancy work pull before running out of slack, enabling it to apply tension to the release. If yours does not look like this, you should update and test it.

Regardless of manufacturer, check your life raft's manual and hydrostatic (if equipped) release mechanisms, make sure they match the installation instructions. I encounter incorrect installations for both on an all too frequent basis. If the raft is mounted in such a way that it will **not** fall out of its cradle, or overboard, by releasing the manual mechanism, then it should be tested. If you aren't sure, or you aren't comfortable doing this, call on a professional for assistance. A genuine emergency is not the time to find out the system has been installed incorrectly.

For more on life raft installations see [this article](#).