

# **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 87 OF 2004**

(Navigational and Seamanship Safety Practices)

## **Notice to Owners and Masters of all Coastal Vessels**

### **The Accident**

A Chinese coastal container vessel was overcome by heavy weather and sank in position 22-22N 114-28E, east of Wong Nai Chau on 19.12.2003. All crewmembers on board were rescued after the accident. However, the cargo of twenty-seven containers went down with the vessel.

Investigation into this accident revealed that the main contributory factor leading to the accident was the fact that, with the containers protruding above the hatch coaming, the hatch cover for the cargo hold had not been put back into position before the vessel proceeded to sea. Furthermore, the Master did not obtain weather information before departure, hence he was not aware that the strong monsoon signal had been hoisted. The vessel subsequently encountered heavy weather in the exposed area south of Mirs Bay. Heavy seas swamped the deck and water entered into the cargo hold. Despite the crew's effort in pumping out the seawater, the vessel finally capsized and sank due to progressive flooding of the cargo hold.

### **Lessons Learnt**

2. Important lessons that should be learnt from the incident are:

- (i) Vessels with open cargo hatch are susceptible to flooding, especially in adverse weather conditions. The sea conditions in the Hong Kong harbour can be deceptively calm whilst rough seas prevail in exposed waters outside the harbour. It is therefore imperative that masters of vessels should obtain the necessary vessel condition and weather information before departure, and to carry out proper assessment on the likely risk that may be encountered during the voyage, before taking their vessels to the open sea.
- (ii) The prevailing weather report and weather forecast for the intended voyage are important items of information to be assessed to ensure safety of navigation. The local radio stations broadcast general weather report at half hourly intervals. In addition, the Dial-a-Weather service provided by Hong Kong Observatory is also available to members of the public who wish to obtain the latest weather forecast. Telephone numbers for listening to the Cantonese, Putonghua and English bulletins are 1878200, 1878202 and 1878066 respectively.

3. Owners and masters of all coastal vessels should pay attention to the Marine Department Notice No.113 of 1999 to ensure cargo hold hatches are properly secured before the vessel sails on a voyage. They should also take note of the above lessons and be reminded to take the necessary precautions to ensure navigational safety of their vessels before proceeding to sea.

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**Director of Marine**

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