

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 105 OF 2004

(Navigational and Seamanship Safety Practices)

Notice to Owners and Masters of all Outboard Open Sampans (P4 Sampan)

The Accident

On 29 April 2004 an open sampan (P4 sampan) fitted with outboard engine was reported to have sunk while engaged in fishing near the coast of Tai Long Wan in Sai Kung. Three persons on board fell into the sea. They managed to swim to the nearby coast but one female person was subsequently washed out by a large wave and drown.

2. Investigation into this accident revealed that the main contributory factor leading to the accident was the under-estimation of potential risks associated with operating small open vessel in exposed area. The sampan was operated by persons without valid certificate. The covers of its buoyancy tanks were not properly secured. Also two of these tanks were bilged for the stowage of fish catches. When the sampan encountered unexpectedly large waves, the tank covers were washed away and the inner hull together with the tanks were instantly flooded with seawaters. The reserved buoyancy was quickly lost which has led to the sinking of the sampan.

3. The persons on board the sampan appeared unprepared for emergency. Despite the fact that the deceased was unable to swim, she had not donned a lifejacket while on board.

Lessons Learnt

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

- (i) P4 sampan must be operated by certificated person only;
- (ii) P4 sampan must not be operated outside the restricted area specified in the operator's certificate;
- (iii) The covers of the buoyancy tanks should be properly secured;
- (iv) Persons riding on P4 sampan should wear lifejacket.

5. Owners and masters of all P4 sampans should take note of the above lessons, and be reminded to take the necessary precautions to ensure safety of their vessel and personnel on board.

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