

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 106 OF 2004

(Navigational and Seamanship Safety Practices)

Notice to Owners and Masters of Launches and Pleasure Vessels

The Accident

On 25 February 2004 a person was reported to have fallen into the sea and subsequently drown near the coast of Ham Tin Wan in Sai Kung. Shortly before the incident the deceased was seen sitting on a square raft and was pulling the raft from the beach back to his pleasure boat anchored off the beach. At the material time the deceased was engaged in clearing refuse from the beach of Ham Tin Wan with other cleaning workers. The square raft, which was tied to the pleasure boat by a long rope, was used by the deceased to transfer himself and the cleaning workers between the boat and the beach. It was of primitive built consisting of plastic drums tied to a square wooden frame.

2. The investigation attributes the cause of this accident to the use of the raft which is considered unsuitable and potentially dangerous. While the deceased was pulling the raft back to his boat, the raft was rocked rigorously by the rising tidal waves which might have caused the deceased to lose his balance and fall over the side.

3. The deceased did not wear lifejacket while riding on the raft. It is believed that when he tried to board the raft or the boat from the water, he might have been hit by the raft or the yawing boat, which caused him to become unconscious and subsequently drowned.

Lessons Learnt

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

- (i) Due to its square shape and primitive construction, the raft is not considered as a safe means for transferring people from vessel to shore. When transferring people in remote beach area where no proper landing pier is available, a small dinghy or sampan would be safer and easier to maneuver than a square raft.
- (ii) While transferring people on small craft it is important that they should always wear lifejacket. A lifejacket would be able to keep a person afloat even if he or she has become unconscious in water. Due to the highly visible colour of a lifejacket, it would also be easier for the rescuers to locate and rescue the person in water.

5. Owners and masters of launches and pleasure vessels should take note of the above lessons, and be reminded to take the necessary precautions to ensure safety of personnel when transferring people from vessel to shore and vice versa.

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