

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 113 OF 1999

(Navigational and Seamanship Safety Practices)

Observance of Seamanship Practices in Loading and Securing of Cargo

A Chinese coastal cargo vessel, M.V. Yuan Da, was overcome by heavy weather and sank in a position 22-18N 114-24E north of Ninepin Group on 31.3.99. Although the majority of crew on board were rescued, one crew member was reported missing and was later found dead.

Investigation into this accident has revealed that the major contributory factor leading to the sinking of the vessel was that the cargoes in the cargo hold and on main deck had not been properly stowed and secured. Also the cargo hold hatches had not been properly closed and battened down before the vessel's departure from Hong Kong. When the vessel encountered heavy weather near Ninepin Group of islands the cargoes shifted and the hatches were smashed open, resulting in entry of water into cargo hold and engine room. The vessel developed an excessive list and sank in a short time.

It is the responsibility of masters to ensure that cargoes and hatches are properly secured and the vessel fully prepared against adverse weather before the ship sails on a voyage. Master of vessels are reminded of the need to observe good seamanship practices in preparing their ships fully for sea voyages before departing from a port to avoid accidents of this nature.

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