

## **Fatal accident of a worker after fallen overboard from a raft at Ham Tin Wan on 25 February 2004**

### 1. The Incident

- 1.1 On 25 February 2004 at about 1040, a Chinese male was reported to have fallen into the sea and gone missing in the position about 50 metres off the beach of Ham Tin Wan(鹹田灣). Shortly before the incident he was seen sitting on a square raft and was pulling the raft 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 Bay together with 5 cleaning workers.
- 1.2 A search was carried out by various government launches and helicopter but unable to find the deceased. On 1 March 2004 the body of a male person was found floating in Ham Tin Wan area. The body was later identified to be the deceased, who had gone missing in this incident.

### 2. Findings

- 2.1 The raft was primitively built and was 1.2 X 1.2 metres in size. It consisted of a wooden frame lashed to 7 plastic drums. The drums provided buoyancy for the raft while the wooden frame was covered by a net to form a platform. Due to its primitive construction, the raft did not provide a stable platform for the carriage of personnel. It had no fencing or handhold for the person sitting on it. Also, in view of its square shape and high center of gravity when a person is sitting on top, the raft was more susceptible to wave motion than a dinghy or sampan.
- 2.2 The deceased was a healthy person and a good swimmer. The weather on the day of the incident was mild. Under normal circumstances the deceased should not have problem in maintaining survival after fallen into the sea. It is therefore suspected that the deceased might have been hit by the raft or the yawing boat while trying to board the raft or the boat from the water. Due to the rigorous movement of the craft it is considered possible. If his head was hit he might become unconscious and subsequently drowned.
- 2.3 The deceased did not wear any lifejacket during the incident. Had he worn a lifejacket, he might have a better chance of survival. A lifejacket should be

able to keep him afloat even if he became unconscious. Furthermore, due to the highly visible colour of a lifejacket, it would be much easier for the rescuers to locate him even if he was carried away by the tidal current.

### 3. The Lessons

- 3.1 The investigation attributes the cause of this accident to the use of an unsuitable and potentially dangerous raft by the deceased for transferring himself from the beach to the boat. 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.
- 3.2 The raft is not considered as a safe means for transferring people at sea. In this case a small dinghy or sampan should be safer and easier to maneuver than the raft. Had the deceased worn a lifejacket, he would have a better chance of survival and being rescued.
- 3.3 It is also believed that the safety awareness of the deceased had been reduced due to complacency on the seemingly favorable environmental conditions and his ability to swim, which is considered to be the root cause of this accident.



Ham Tin Wan

Location of Ham Tin Wan



The square raft and the wooden paddle