

## **Fire aboard the Locally Licensed Motor Launch “SEA SMOOTH” at HKJC Kau Sai Chau Golf Club Sai Kung Pier, Sai Kung at about 1440 hours on 27th April 2004**

### **1. The Incident**

1.1 At about 1440 on 27 April 2004, a fire broke out in the starboard engine room of the locally licensed motor launch Sea Smooth shortly after all passengers were disembarked at the HKJC Kau Sai Chau Golf Club Sai Kung pier, Sai Kung. Crewmembers attempted to extinguish the fire with portable extinguishers with no success. All the 3 crewmembers abandoned the vessel and escaped ashore. The burning vessel drifted to the nearby Sai Kung Public Pier, where the firemen extinguished the fire. As a result of the fire, the starboard engine room sustained fire damage and the fire engulfed the entire superstructure of the vessel (see Fig. 1). One crewmember was slightly injured in the incident.

### **2. Findings**

2.1 The investigation establishes that the fire probably started in the starboard main engine starting control panel and spread throughout the aft portion of the engine room. The opened access hatches of the engine room then allowed the fire to spread to other areas of the vessel. While the fire damage to the interior of the engine starting control panel precluded any possible failure of circuitry to be identified, it is believed that an electrical fault, e.g. short circuiting or arcing in loose wiring connections, had attributed to the cause of the fire (see Fig. 2).

2.2 The investigation also identifies the following contributing factors to the fire:

- (a) There was no specific inspection and maintenance programme for the low voltage electrical system on board.
- (b) The crews' handling of the fire was not effective and the instructions available on board contained no fire fighting procedures for opening a hatch into a space suspected of being on fire.
- (c) The lack of fire drills for crewmembers left them unprepared to handle fire emergency.
- (d) The lack of a fixed fire extinguishing system for the engine room had made it difficult for the crewmembers to contain and extinguish the fire.

### **3. The Lessons**

3.1 Important lessons should be learnt from this incident :-

- (a) the need for the specific inspection and maintenance programme for low voltage electrical system and equipment, the proper procedures for handling fire, and the need to conduct adequate fire drills on board, especially when new crewmembers are joining the vessel.
- (b) consultation with the relevant local vessels Associations for the provision of the fixed fire extinguishing system on their vessels as appropriate.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2