

The sinking of the Locally Licensed Fishing Vessel M68950Y in position about 22° 20.56'N 114° 23.48'E on 8 May 2004

## **1. The Incident**

- 1.1 At about 0750 on 8 May 2004, the locally licensed fishing vessel M68950Y, while engaged in fishing in the vicinity of Wang Chau, encountered a tornado and rapidly took in water and sank.
- 1.2 At the time of the incident, the weather suddenly changed from moderate to very rough with southeasterly wind at gale force 8.
- 1.3 Three fishermen managed to escape before the vessel sank. Another fisherman disappeared and could not be found.

## **2. Findings**

- 2.1 Analysis of the radar imageries of the Hong Kong Observatory showed that a tornado with a dimension in the order of 10 km radius traveled from west-southwest towards east-northeast across the territory in the morning of 8 May 2004 (Figure 1). The tornado was closest to Wang Chau at the time of accident reported by the master. The Hong Kong Observatory also received another report suggesting a tornado with a much smaller size but probably higher wind speed could have been spawned from the larger tornado described above. The smaller tornado could have affected the area near the accident location.
- 2.2 The wind speed recorded between 0715 to 0730 reached a gale force of about 68 km per hour. The gale force wind was too strong that fishing vessels of wooden construction like M68950Y would not be able to withstand.
- 2.3 The accident was purely fortuitous due to act of nature.

## **3. Lesson**

- 3.1 Fishermen should listen to the weather forecast so as to receive updated weather conditions for safe navigation.

Figure 1 The Probable Path of the Tornado on 8 May 2004

