



Report of Investigation
into the Sinking of Local
Licensed Vessel “M 20242A”
Causing Two Fatalities
on 19 February 2005



The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Marine Department
Marine Accident Investigation Section

Purpose of Investigation

This incident is investigated, and published in accordance with the IMO Code for the Investigation of Marine Casualties and Incidents promulgated under IMO Assembly Resolution A.849(20). The purpose of this investigation conducted by the Marine Accident Investigation and Shipping Security Policy Branch (MAISSPB) of Marine Department is to determine the circumstances and the causes of the incident with the aim of improving the safety of life at sea and avoiding similar incidents in future.

The conclusions drawn in this report aim to identify the different factors contributing to the incident. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability towards any particular organization or individual except so far as necessary to achieve the said purpose.

The MAISSPB has no involvement in any prosecution or disciplinary action that may be taken by the Marine Department or others resulting from this accident.

1 Summary

- 1.1 On 19 February 2005 at about 0500, the locally licensed vessel "*Chung Man*" of license No. M20242A (hereinafter referred as the Vessel) was reported to have been taken in water and sunk at about 2.5 nautical miles west of Ping Chau. The Master and the Engineer were drifting in the water. About four hours later, the Master was picked up from the sea in an unconscious condition. He was sent to hospital for emergency treatment and was certified dead after arrival at the hospital. The body of the Engineer was discovered after 10 days of the accident in the vicinity waters on 2 March 2005.

2. Description of "*Chung Man*"

2.1 Particulars

License No.	:	M20242A
Type	:	Wooden Cargo Vessel
Length	:	23.6 metres
Breadth	:	4.8 metres
Net Tonnage	:	56.95
Place of Build	:	Unknown
Date of First Licensed	:	16 September 2004
Engine	:	1 x 6 cylinders Cummins Diesel Engine
Engine Power	:	300 horsepower

3. Source of Information

- 3.1 The owner of the Vessel - Mr. LAU;
- 3.2 The employer of the Master and the Engineer - Mr. TAO;
- 3.3 The friend of the crewmember(s) - Mr. CHENG;
- 3.4 Hong Kong Police Force; and
- 3.5 Hong Kong Observatory.

4. Outline of Events

- 4.1 On the evening of 18 February 2005, the Vessel loaded with used TV sets, computer monitors and computer casings departed from Chai Wan Public Cargo Working Area (CWPCWA) for Grass Island. Two crewmembers consisting of a Master and an Engineer were on board the Vessel.
- 4.2 At 2150 the Vessel was intercepted by a marine police launch near Tung Lung Chau, the Vessel returned back to CWPCWA after the inspection. Later, the Vessel departed CWPCWA for Grass Island again.
- 4.3 At about 0500 on 19 February 2005, the Vessel was taking in water and started to sink, the crewmembers then requested their friend Mr. CHENG via mobile phone for assistant. At about 0530, Mr. CHENG then dialed '999' for help.
- 4.4 At 0541, the first marine police launch 'PL73' arrived at the scene for searching the crewmembers. Later, boats and helicopters from other rescue parties also arrived at the scene for the search operation. However, only floating TV sets were seen at the vicinity waters.
- 4.5 As the location where the Vessel sunk was close to the border of China, the Guangdong Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre was requested for assistance at 0712. At 0920 patrol boat from the China Maritime Safety Administration '海巡 1601' informed the Marine Police that they found a man floating at the sea with a lifebuoy. The man was later picked up by the rescue team, he was immediately sent ashore and taken to hospital by an ambulance.

The rescued man was later confirmed to be the Master of the Vessel. He was certified dead in Tseng Kwan O Hospital at 1111.

- 4.6 The Engineer of the Vessel was not found through out the search operation, however, his body was discovered by a fisherman in the water near Crooked Island about 4 nautical miles west of the Vessel's sinking position on 2 March 2005.

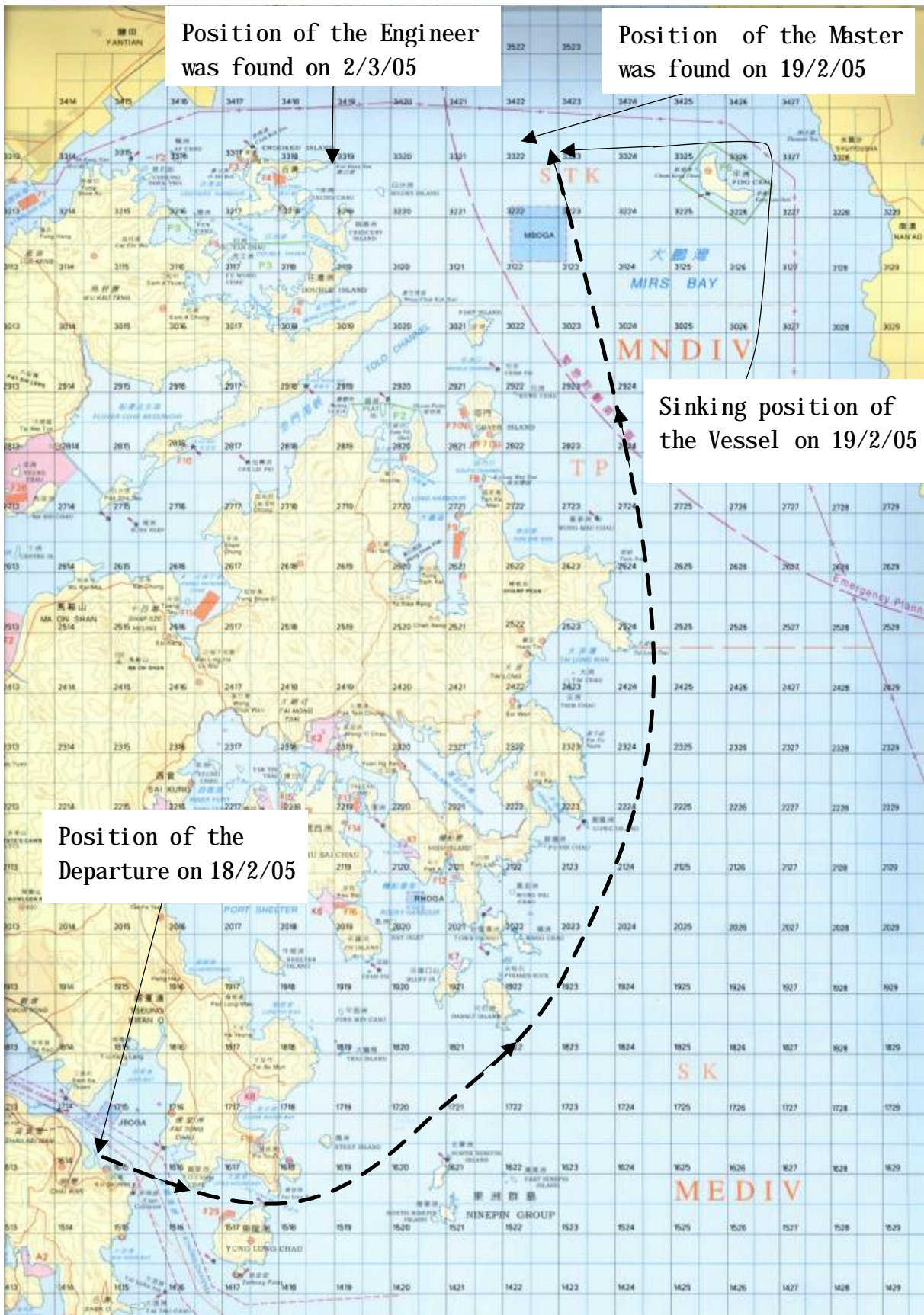


Fig. 1 The course of the vessel

5. Factual Findings and Analysis

5.1 “*Chung Man*” (M20242A) was a 56.95 N.R.T. locally licensed wooden vessel with dimensions of 23.6 metres in length and 4.8 metres in breadth. The Vessel was equipped with a 300 horsepower diesel engine for providing both the electrical and propulsion power of the Vessel. According to the equipment listed in the license of the Vessel, no separate generator engine for electricity was fitted on board. The service speed of the Vessel was estimated to be about 10 knots. The Vessel was first licensed on 16 September 2004.



Fig 2 The accommodation of the vessel "*Chung Man*"



Fig 3 The hull of the vessel "*Chung Man*"

5.2 The registered owner (Mr. LAU) of the Vessel stated that he purchased the Vessel on 2 October 2004. As he stayed in Mainland China frequently, he requested his friend (Mr. TAO) to manage the Vessel including the operation and employment of crew for him.

5.3 According to the weather report, light breeze came from north at force 2,

waves at height of 0.2 to 0.3 metres was expected. The visibility was ranged from 9 km to 16 km inside the Hong Kong waters. Therefore, both the weather and visibility were good for sailing.

- 5.4 The water depth of the sinking position of the Vessel was about 17 metres.
- 5.5 Mr. TAO stated that the Vessel was scheduled to ship cargo from Chai Wan to Grass Island. However, the Vessel had passed the Grass Island and sank about 2.5 nautical miles west of Ping Chau near the Chinese boundary. It appeared that the destination of the Vessel was Mainland China instead of Grass Island.
- 5.6 Mr. LAM held a Local Certificate of Competency as Master for commercial vessels upto 60 tons, he was qualified for sailing the Vessel. However, Mr. KWAN held a Local Certificate of Competency as Engineer for fishing vessels, he was not qualify for the operation of cargo vessels.
- 5.7 The Vessel was loaded with 320 sets of used television, 530 sets of used computer monitor and 290 sets of used computer case. The estimated weight of the cargoes was about 20 metric tons¹, such weight did not exceed the loading capacity of the Vessel. However, in case of water leaked into the cargo hold, it would not easily be detected as the cargo hold was filled up with the cargo. (See fig.4, the loading condition of the cargo of a similar vessel)



Fig. 4. The loading of used TV and computer monitor loaded to a similar type of vessel
Mr. LAU stated that the Vessel had run aground one day before the date of the departure of the vessel, however the grounding of the vessel was not reported to the Marine Department. Mr. LAU further stated that the Vessel was taken

¹ Taking an assumption of the average weight of televisions, computer monitors and computer cases were 35kg, 10kg and 10kg respectively.

to Fook Hing Shipyard (Translation) in Shau Kei Wan for inspection by an owner representative on 18 February 2005, Mr. TAO told Mr. LAU over the phone that no abnormality was found on the Vessel. Mr. LAU did not know the details of the inspection as no inspection record could be produced. He knew only the cost of the inspection. The work of the inspection was in question. The damage due to the grounding of the Vessel could not easily be detected, as cracks on the hull and damage on the caulking would be propagated subject to vibration during voyages causing ingress of seawater.

5.9 Mr. LAU stated that the Vessel was equipped with three portable submersible pumps that could be used to pump out the water if flooding occurred in the cargo hold. However, the cargo hold without any bilge level indicating devices was fully stowed with cargo. Ingress of water in the cargo hold due to failure of the hull could not be easily detected. In addition, portable submersible pumps could not be lowered into the cargo hold as the space of the cargo hold was fully occupied by cargo.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The information available for the investigation was limited, as the Vessel had sunk and crewmembers were died in the accident. Based on the available information obtained, the Investigation Officer deduced and established the following probable causes:

- i The Vessel had run aground shortly before the accident, defects such as minor cracks and damage of the caulking has occurred but not easily be detected. These damages would be worsen during the voyages and caused ingress of water into the cargo hold and engine room of the Vessel.
- ii. The Vessel was fully loaded with cargo, flooding at early stage would not be detected by crewmembers. In addition, no room for portable submersible pumps to be lowered into the cargo hold for pumping out the seawater.

7. Recommendations

7.1 A copy of this report should be sent to the owner of the Vessel and Cargo-boats Transportation Workers' Union to draw their attention on the

findings of this incident and lesson learnt.

8. **Submission**

- 8.1 In the event that the conduct of any person or organization is commented in an accident investigation report, it is the policy of the Marine Department to send a copy of the draft report to that person or organization for their comments.
- 8.2 The final draft report was sent to the owner of the vessel and the employer of the crew requesting them to revert with their comments. However, no submission was received from them.