

Mariners reminded to navigate safely as fog season approaches (with photo)

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As the fog season is approaching, the Director of Marine, Mr Francis Liu, reminded all masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels to make significant speed reductions in restricted visibility.

Speaking at the opening of the 2012 Navigational Safety Seminar at the Hong Kong Space Museum this afternoon (January 11), Mr Liu cautioned that in these days of erratic climate change, it is not surprising if mists or fogs appear out of season. Consequently, navigators should post extra lookouts even when moving at low speed.

Mr Liu said, "In order to ensure the safety of lives at sea in a range of different weather conditions experienced during the year in Hong Kong, vessel owners, operators and responsible personnel on board must take adequate safety precautions and have in place contingency measures for every intended voyage."

Over the past few years, serious or fatal marine accidents involving various types of vessels have occurred at different locations in Hong Kong and in nearby waters. Investigations into the causes of these accidents reveal that most of them can be attributed to inadequate safety preparations or contingency measures before and after the commencement of the voyage concerned.

Mr Liu also took the opportunity to remind vessel owners, operators and responsible personnel on board to exercise particular caution when operating in areas of Hong Kong waters and the Pearl River estuary where marine works are taking place.

These include reclamation works in the basin of the ex-Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area and in the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter; large scale marine works associated with the development of a new cruise terminal and Southeast Kowloon off Kai Tak; and the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

Marine safety measures are ineffective without the awareness and co-operation of marine users and associations. To address this, the Marine Department is putting together a series of education seminars and publicity campaigns to highlight proper safety precautions so that marine accidents can be reduced to a minimum.

This annual seminar, hosted by the Marine Department, was attended by more

than 170 representatives from the shipping and fishing industries, as well as masters, coxswains and operators of local and river-trade vessels.

Topics discussed include the application of collision regulations in Hong Kong waters; analysis of marine accidents and their implications; maintenance and safe operation of ship engines, and the relationship between weather information and navigational safety.

Apart from speakers from the Marine Department and Hong Kong Observatory, staff from the Marine Police, Fire Services Department and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department also joined the discussions.

