

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 22 OF 2016

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Fatal accident due to capsize of a pleasure vessel

The Incident

1. A locally licensed open-type pleasure vessel was deployed in operation in the waters off Sunny Bay, east of Cheung Sok, Lantau Island.
2. The accident happened at night. The coxswain and seven passengers were on board the vessel. The weather was bad with wind force of around 5 on the Beaufort scale. The wave height of the sea was about 2 metres and the visibility was about 14 km.
3. When the coxswain steered the vessel for turning around, his view was blocked by two of the passengers standing on the starboard side of the vessel outside the wheelhouse. The vision of the coxswain was further hindered by the strong light inside the wheelhouse set for filming purpose. Without knowing a large wave coming to hit the vessel at its starboard side, the coxswain could not react promptly causing the vessel to heel severely to its port side. Floods of sea water poured into the vessel leading to the capsize of the vessel.
4. With the exception of a passenger who had been found trapped inside the vessel and later certified dead, the other 6 passengers and the coxswain were rescued.
5. Investigation into the accident revealed the following contributing factors:
 - (i) the sea condition changed from moderate to bad all in a sudden that a large wave hit the vessel's starboard side until it capsized; and
 - (ii) the coxswain's vision was hindered by passengers and the strong light in the wheelhouse. As a result, he was not able to react promptly when the large wave coming from the starboard side.

Lessons learnt

6. It is important that when a vessel is in operation, the look-out of the coxswain should not be obstructed or affected at all times.

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