

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 178 OF 2016
(Fire Safety Practices)

Fire onboard local fishing vessel in typhoon shelter

The incident

A locally licensed fishing vessel caught fire onboard while she was moored side by side with other fishing vessels to form a group in a typhoon shelter.

2. The fire rapidly spread to other vessels nearby. As a result, a total of 29 vessels burnt out or sunk including the aforementioned fishing vessel. Five persons were slightly injured in the incident.

3. The investigation into the incident revealed that:

- a) the fire might be caused by a short-circuit fault of electric power cable or an electric leakage in the cabin of the fishing vessel;
- b) the fisherman did not carry out regular patrol of the vessel's cabin and the engine room. When the fire broke out, the fisherman did not take any action to fight the fire but escaped immediately. Since the best time to control the fire was missed, the fire subsequently went out of control; and
- c) there were many vessels moored side by side to stay in groups in the typhoon shelter. Wind effect and cooking gas cylinder explosion caused the rapid spread of fire resulting in many vessels burnt out or sunk.

Lessons Learnt

4. In order to avoid the recurrence of a similar accident, the attention of owners, coxswains and/or persons in charge of all locally licensed vessels are drawn to the following important advice:

- a) when vessels are moored together in a typhoon shelter, fire watch must be maintained by conducting regular patrols of cabins and engine rooms;
- b) it is necessary to inspect regularly and maintain all shipboard electrical appliances and the power supply systems in a good condition for the prevention of short-circuit faults or electric leakage;
- c) it is necessary to minimize the amount of flammable materials and cooking gas cylinders (not more than 50 kg of LPG capacity) stored onboard and to keep them away from fire risk; and

- d) it is necessary to enhance training of crew members for dealing with fire emergency situations so as to familiarize them with fire-fighting procedures and the use of fire-fighting equipment.

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