

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 39 OF 2018**

### **(Safe Working Practice)**

#### **Fatal accident of man overboard from a dumb lighter**

##### **The Incident**

1. A locally licensed dumb lighter was towed by a tug boat from a shipyard in northern Tsing Yi to the River Trade Terminal in Tuen Mun.
2. When the tug-and-tow was underway and was in the waters off the north of Lantau Island and south of Tsing Lung Tau, the crane operator and the person in charge of works (PIC) on board the dumb lighter threw a damaged water dispenser into the water. However, the power cord of the water dispenser was entangled with the PIC's waist bag which came off and fell overboard together with the water dispenser. When the PIC tried to grip the waist bag, he lost his balance and fell into water together with the water dispenser and disappeared. His body was found in nearby waters about a month later.
3. Investigation into the incident revealed that:
  - (i) the two persons on board the dumb lighter did not take any safety precaution and protection when carrying the water dispenser and walking towards the ship side where there was no bulwark nor railing;
  - (ii) the dumb lighter did not carry any appropriate communication equipment. Only after hearing the shouting from the dumb lighter personnel, the tugboat coxswain reversed the course of sailing to berth alongside the dumb lighter and was aware of the man overboard incident, thus delaying the search and rescue operation; and
  - (iii) the two persons on board the dumb lighter breached local laws by throwing a water dispenser into water.

##### **Lessons learnt**

4. In order to avoid recurrence of a similar accident, the attention of owners, shipboard personnel and PIC of locally licensed dumb lighters are drawn to the following important advice:
  - (i) to display conspicuous warning signs on board to advise that there are no guard rails installed on deck;

- (ii) to issue a notice to remind shipboard personnel that when the lighter is under tow, they should avoid moving close to the ship sides where there are no guard rails unless appropriate safety and protective precautions have been taken;
- (iii) to provide training to shipboard personnel to prepare for coping with overboard incident and raise their awareness of the advice given in Marine Department Notice No. 128 of 2014, including the provision of appropriate communication equipment such as walkie-talkie and mobile telephones to facilitate communication in an emergency; and
- (iv) to educate shipboard personnel against illegal dumping of garbage or other unwanted articles overboard and remind them that offenders are liable for prosecution.

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