

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 144 OF 2018

(Safe Working Practice)

Fatal accident of man overboard from a locally licensed dumb lighter

The Incident

1. A locally licensed dumb lighter (the lighter) was towed by a tug from Stonecutters Island via Mirs Bay towards Yantian. When the tug-and-tow was underway in the waters off Round Island in Mirs Bay, a sailor fell overboard from the lighter and drowned to death.
2. The accident happened in the evening. In the vicinity waters of the accident, the weather was rainy with a moderate northerly wind.
3. The investigation into the incident revealed that:
 - (i) the deck of the lighter was slippery due to the rainy weather and the sailor did not wear safety shoes with anti-slip function. After completing work at the bow, the sailor returned to the accommodation at stern through the ship side. It was probable that the sailor slipped or might be tripped by wire, chain or manhole cover on deck. He then lost his balance and fell overboard; and
 - (ii) the sailor did not wear lifejacket and drowned to death after falling overboard.

Lessons learnt

4. In order to avoid recurrence of similar incident, the attention of owners, shipboard personnel and person in charge of works are drawn to the following important advice:
 - (i) in accordance with the requirements of the “Code of Practice -- Safety Standards for Class II Vessels”, to display conspicuous warning signs on board informing shipboard personnel that there are no guard rails installed on deck. They should also be reminded that, when the lighter is under tow and if needed, all shipboard personnel must wear suitable safety or protective gears (e.g. suitable working clothing, anti-slip safety shoes, lifejacket, safety belt, etc.) to walk through or move around unguarded ship sides. Shipboard personnel must pay particular caution in rainy days to prevent falling overboard due to slippery deck; and

- (ii) to keep good housekeeping of the materials on deck, such as wires and chains etc., to minimize the safety hazards of tripping any person on board.

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