

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 3 OF 2019

(Marine Industrial Safety, Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

A locally licensed launch sank in the marine construction water area

The incident

1. A locally licensed launch (*the launch*) sailing with 39 passengers and 2 launch crew contacted a submerged object in the marine construction water area (MCWA) of the three-runway system (the 3RS) at the north of the Hong Kong International Airport. This caused damage to the hull and water ingress into *the launch*. The coxswain immediately steered *the launch* alongside a nearby work barge (barge). All persons on *the launch* were safely evacuated to the barge. *The launch* sank by the side of the barge shortly afterwards. No oil pollution or casualties were reported. The weather was fair and the sea was slight at the time of the incident.

2. The preliminary investigation revealed that:

- I) the marine construction contractor responsible for the construction works failed to remove or mark the submerged object in MCWA of the 3RS immediately, and failed to ensure that vessels using MCWA had received the relevant navigational warning; and
- II) when *the launch* was using MCWA of the 3RS, she did not follow the relevant safety guidelines to navigate within designated channel.

Lessons learnt

3. In order to avoid similar incidents:

- I) when any unidentified object is found in MCWA, marine construction contractors should immediately:
 - i) inform all users of MCWA of the finding and make sure they have received such information; and
 - ii) lay a marker buoy for the unidentified object or arrange a guard boat on the scene to alert vessels in the vicinity to stay away from the object;

- II) marine construction contractors should establish appropriate procedures to ensure that any object fallen into MCWA which may affect safe navigation will immediately be handled; and
- III) the owner and coxswain of all vessels should ensure that when their vessels use MCWA, they should navigate within designated channel. If any deviation from the channel is required, they should check with the concerned party (e.g. traffic control centre of MCWA) to ensure navigational safety.

Maisie CHENG
Director of Marine

Marine Department
Government of the HKSAR
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