

# **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 84 OF 2019**

**(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)**

## **A fatal accident of a local fishing vessel capsized in the waters of Cheung Chau**

### **The incident**

1. When a locally licensed fishing vessel was en route from Yung Shue Wan of Lamma Island to Guishan Island of Zhuhai, she encountered severe convective weather in the eastern waters of Cheung Chau and rolled heavily with water on deck. A few minutes later, the on deck plastic barrels containing fish catch slid to port side instantly and caused the fishing vessel listing heavily to port side.
2. The fishing vessel capsized and sank after the coxswain and two fishermen had abandoned the vessel and jumped into the sea. A nearby fishing vessel called the police and rescued the coxswain and a fisherman. Another fisherman was rescued by a police boat which arrived on the scene after a while. He was unconscious at the material time and pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.
3. The investigation revealed the following main contributing factors leading to the accident:
  - (i) the coxswain was lack of knowledge of the vessel's stability and did not take necessary safety precautions. All cargo on board (the plastic barrels containing fish catch) was placed on the open main deck without being properly secured. In the severe convective weather, the fishing vessel rolled heavily with water on deck. This caused the cargo shift on the main deck and resulted in heavy listing of the fishing vessel. Eventually, the fishing vessel lost her stability and capsized;
  - (ii) the coxswain did not pay sufficient attention to the severe convective weather. He lacked risk awareness and preparation for sudden extreme adverse weather. When the fishing vessel was in distress,

he failed to seek assistance in a timely manner and respond to the emergency situation properly as well; and

- (iii) in the emergency, the fisherman was inexperienced in donning a lifejacket. He jumped into the sea without donning the lifejacket timely and properly that caused him to drown.

4. The investigation also found that during the severe convective weather season, the coxswain failed to collect such weather warning information before and during the voyage.

### **Lessons Learnt**

5. In order to avoid similar accidents in future, the attention of the fishery organizations, fishermen's groups, fishing vessels' owners, coxswains and persons in charge is drawn to the following important advice:

- (i) relevant weather information and warnings should be carefully assessed before commencement of voyage and necessary safety precautions should be strengthened. If fish catches are required to be stowed on deck, ship stability should be fully evaluated and all their containers should be properly secured; and
- (ii) safety training on donning lifejackets and emergency drills for crew and fishermen should be strengthened.

**S. F. WONG**  
**Director of Marine (Ag.)**

Marine Department

Government of the HKSAR

Date: 10 May 2019

Action file ref.: MAI/S 902/145-2017