

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 181/2021

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Man overboard accident during fishing operation

The Incident

A man overboard accident happened in the southern waters of Shanwei, China on board a locally licensed fishing vessel holding a Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao registration book (*the fishing vessel*). The accident took place at the transom area of *the fishing vessel*. During the operation of releasing a fishing net into the water, the net rope slipped out of the guide roller. When a crew member (*the fisherman*) tried to put the slipped net rope back to the guide roller, he was entangled with the net, dragged into the water, and went missing. After three days of maritime and aeronautical search and rescue efforts, *the fisherman* was still not found.

2. The investigation into the accident revealed the insufficient communication between the wheelhouse and *the fisherman*; the failure of the master to reduce the speed of the fishing vessel to allow *the fisherman* to adjust the fishing net in a safe manner when an abnormality in net releasing happened; insufficient safety awareness of *the fisherman* when performing the fishing operation; and that the crew members were not wearing lifejackets during the fishing operation in a windy and choppy sea which increased the risk of drowning when falling into the sea.

3. The investigation also revealed that *the fishing vessel* failed to stop the main engine timely after the accident to prevent the person overboard from getting hurt by the vessel's propulsion wake to increase the chance of his being rescued.

Lessons Learnt

4. The crew of fishing vessels should enhance their safety awareness and maintain effective communication with the wheelhouse during fishing operations, in particular, to suspend operations as necessary when there is an abnormality in releasing/retrieving fishing nets for reducing the risks of personnel being entangled with the net or falling into the sea.

5. The crew of fishing vessels should wear lifejackets or working lifejackets at all times while performing fishing operations with potential risks of falling overboard.

6. When a man overboard accident occurs, the fishing vessel should stop immediately or steer away from the person overboard as appropriate, to prevent that person from being struck by the propeller or impacted by the propulsion wake.

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