

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 41/2022

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Ship capsizing accident during fishing operation

The Incident

A fatal capsizing accident happened on board a local licensed fishing vessel holding a Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao Fishing Vessel Registration Book (*the fishing vessel*), leading to all three of her crew members falling into the sea during the operation of collecting fish catches at waters off west of Sha Chau, near the boundary of Hong Kong. Two crew members were rescued by a passing vessel, and the remaining crew member was missing. Unfortunately, the body of the missing crew was found in the waters of Guishan a few days after a 55-hour joint search and rescue operation with the Mainland Authority.

2. The investigation into the accident revealed that the capsizing of *the fishing vessel* was due to a failure to maintain her stability under the windy and choppy sea conditions. Her freeboard was decreased after gaining the weight of the fish catches, which made the main deck closer to the water surface. The seawater surged onto the main deck and went into the fish holds underneath. This, together with the influence of the free surface effect, resulted in a quick reduction of the stability of *the fishing vessel*. Furthermore, the coxswain of *the fishing vessel* did not have sufficient awareness of safe navigation. He failed to collect navigational warnings and weather forecasts; take effective preventive measures including early return of the voyage prior to the approach of the severe weather; or take shelter from the wind, adjusting the course carefully to reduce seawater being shipped on the deck.

3. The investigation into the accident also revealed that the crew members of *the fishing vessel* lacked awareness of life-saving safety and failed to wear life jackets in time, which weakened the chances of being rescued for those who fell into the sea.

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Lessons Learnt

4. The shipowners and coxswains of fishing vessels should:
- (a) fully understand the stability of fishing vessels and the influencing factors, and avoid collecting fish catches under windy and choppy sea conditions;
 - (b) improve the awareness of safe navigation including navigating carefully, keeping watch of weather changes, and actively taking measures against the severe weather, such as adjusting course, returning or taking shelter from the wind; and
 - (c) enhance the training and emergency drills of the crew members of fishing vessels on life-saving skills such as wearing life jackets and abandon ship.

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