

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 42/2022

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Fatal fire accident while engaging in fishing operation

The Incident

A fatal fire incident happened on board a locally licensed fishing vessel holding a Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macau Fishing Vessel Registration Book (*the fishing vessel*) at waters off south of Shanwei, China during the fishing operation in the early morning. Under the choppy sea and high wind, the fire spread quickly from the engine room entrance at the aft to the mid-ship and to the bridge on the upper deck. The crew members had inadequate survival training and could not release the life raft when abandoning *the fishing vessel*. The accident resulted in the missing of eight crew members with only four crew members rescued. The vessel sank on the same day.

2. The investigation revealed that the contributory factors leading to this fatal accident might be due to the short circuit or electrical leakage of the rechargeable batteries located at the engine room entrance; the lack of fire safety awareness among crew members resulted in their failing to take the first opportunity to fight the fire by using fire extinguishers; and the lack of life-saving safety awareness of the crew members resulted in their failing to release the life raft and to wear life jackets when abandoning *the fishing vessel*, which weakened the chances of being rescued for those who fell into the sea.

3. The investigation also revealed that *the fishing vessel* was holding a Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macau mobile fishing vessel licence, and the number of its crew members did not fulfil the minimum manning requirement for fishing vessels in Hong Kong or Mainland China while engaging in fishing activities within Mainland waters.

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Lessons Learnt

4. The owners and coxswain of fishing vessels shall:
- (a) arrange technicians to perform regular inspections of the condition of rechargeable batteries and repair the electrical system and equipment on board to prevent the short circuit or electrical leakage of the batteries or electrical wires from happening;
 - (b) enhance the crew members' training on fire emergency response and personal survival; and
 - (c) ensure their vessels holding Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macau mobile fishing vessel licences comply with the relevant minimum manning requirement in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

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Government of the HKSAR

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