

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 112/2022

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Man Overboard Accident during the Recovery of the Auxiliary Boat

The Incident

A fatal man overboard incident happened on board a Chinese Mainland-registered bulk carrier (the vessel) in the waters off Yau Tong while recovering her auxiliary boat (the dinghy). When the crew members were recovering the dinghy, it was suddenly hit by the waves and capsized, causing the two crew members onboard the dinghy to fall overboard. At the time of the accident, both of them were wearing hand pull inflatable lifejackets and safety helmets. The Master immediately organised a search and rescue operation for the crew members who fell into the sea. One of them was rescued, but the other one was missing. Upon receipt of the report, officers of the Marine Department and the Fire Services Department arrived at the scene to conduct search and rescue operation but failed to find the missing crew member. The body of the missing crew member was found in the waters near Tseung Kwan O several days later.

2. The investigation revealed that the accident was mainly due to the failure of the crew to operate the dinghy in accordance with the requirements of the “Operating Regulations for Auxiliary Boats” provided onboard, which stipulate inter alia that the crew member in charge of the dinghy shall hold a valid certificate of competency as a coxswain or navigational officer; a dinghy should not navigate at night if it is not eligible for night navigation; no one is allowed on board a dinghy during its launch or recovery; and the use of the dinghy is not allowed while the vessel is navigating. In addition, the crew operating the dinghy failed to maintain effective communication with the bridge; there was inadequate lighting during the operation of the dinghy at night; and the crew lacked sufficient safety awareness of operating the dinghy, for example, the uneven weight distribution on the dinghy might bring about the risk of capsizing and personnel falling overboard. The crew also failed to assess the effect of waves on the recovery operation of the dinghy, as

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well as the danger posed by the current generated by the vessel's propellers in operation to the lives of people fallen overboard.

Lessons Learnt

3. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar accidents in the future, the shipowner, all masters, and the crew of vessels should:

- (a) enhance crew safety training to improve their safety awareness, particularly on the operation of dinghies, with a view to reducing the risk of crew falling overboard;
- (b) maintain effective communication between the bridge and the operating crew of the dinghy;
- (c) strictly operate the dinghy in accordance with the requirements of the "Operating Regulations for Auxiliary Boats" provided on board; and
- (d) provide adequate lighting for dinghy recovery operation at night.

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Date: 1 June 2022

Action file ref.: L/M No. 4/2022 in MAI/P 901/101-2021