

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 138/2022**

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

### **Fatal fire accident happened on board a fishing vessel while underway**

#### **The Incident**

A fatal fire accident happened on board a locally licensed wooden fishing vessel (the fishing vessel) in the waters off Kellett Anchorage while it was en route from Shekou, Shenzhen to the Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter, Hong Kong. At the time of the incident, an explosion was heard from the main deck of the fishing vessel, and the fire quickly spread to the whole main deck and its upper deck. The coxswain and a crew member abandoned the fishing vessel with no life jackets on. Afterwards, the coxswain was rescued and conveyed to a local hospital, but the crew member was missing. On the following day, the body of the missing crew member was found at a rocky beach near Tsing Lung Tau.

2. The investigation did not rule out the possibility that the battery explosion and fire were caused by the lack of proper maintenance of the batteries and the electric cables located near the engine room entrance on the main deck, and the resulting short circuit and over heating of the cables. In addition, the wooden hoarding on the main deck of the fishing vessel was coated with a flammable layer which intensified the spread of the fire.

3. The investigation also revealed that the crew of the fishing vessel had weak crisis response capability as they failed to be aware of the occurrence of fire and fight the fire in a timely manner; the fishing vessel did not comply with relevant statutory regulations to place fire extinguishers on the bridge, thus missing the opportunity to put out the fire at an early stage; the fishing vessel was not operated by qualified coxswain and engine operator; and the crew lacked proper emergency drills and exercises, including familiarizing the life jackets storage location on board so that they could wear the life jackets quickly when abandoning the vessel.

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## Lessons Learnt

4. In order to avoid recurrence of similar accidents in the future, the shipowner shall:
- (i) comply with Section 47 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Certification and Licensing) Regulation (Cap. 548D), which requires fishing vessels to be operated by coxswain and engine operator holding relevant certificate of competency;
  - (ii) enhance the provision of emergency drills and training for crew members to respond to emergency situations, including fire-fighting and ship abandonment;
  - (iii) conduct proper maintenance of shipboard electrical circuits and electrical equipment in accordance with the requirements of Local Fishing Vessel Electrical Safety<sup>1</sup>;
  - (iv) carry out regular maintenance of batteries in accordance with the requirements of the “Code of Practice - Safety Standards for Class III Vessels”<sup>2</sup> issued by the Marine Department and the manufacturer recommendations; and
  - (v) equip sufficient fire-fighting equipment in positions as required by the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Safety and Survey) Regulation (Cap. 548G)<sup>3</sup>.

**Ms Carol Yuen**  
**Director of Marine**

Marine Department  
Government of the HKSAR  
Date: 16 June 2022  
Action file ref.: L/M No. 2/2022 in MAI/S 902/022-2020

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<sup>1</sup>Local Fishing Vessel Electrical Safety (Chinese version only) published by the Marine Department can be obtained from the following website:

[https://www.mardep.gov.hk/hk/pub\\_services/ocean/pdf/lvs\\_handbook2.pdf](https://www.mardep.gov.hk/hk/pub_services/ocean/pdf/lvs_handbook2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Code of Practice - Safety Standards for Class III Vessels published by the Marine Department can be obtained from the following website:

[“https://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub\\_services/ocean/pdf/lvs\\_cop3.pdf”](https://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/lvs_cop3.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Table 7 “Class III vessels” of Part 2 “Specific Requirements” in Schedule 4 “Fire Protection and Provision of Fire-Fighting Apparatus” of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Safety and Survey) Regulation (Cap. 548G).