

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 184/2022

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Fatal man overboard accident on a locally licensed auxiliary powered yacht

The Incident

Three yachtsmen practised sailing on a locally licensed auxiliary powered yacht at waters off Kai Tak Cruise Terminal where no other vessels were in the vicinity. One of the yachtsmen (*the yachtsman*) was standing on the port side foredeck after hoisting and freeing an asymmetrical spinnaker. The asymmetrical spinnaker ballooned suddenly due to a strong gust of wind and pushed *the yachtsman* to the leeward side, causing him to lose his balance and fall overboard. *The yachtsman* was recovered and sent to a hospital but certified dead later on the same day.

2. The investigation revealed that the main contributory factors of the accident were:

- (a) *the yachtsman* had insufficient situation awareness while operating the asymmetrical spinnaker on the foredeck, underestimated the risk of falling overboard and failed to stay alert for safety;
- (b) the communication among the yachtsmen was insufficient for ensuring safe operation on board; and
- (c) *the yachtsman* failed to suitably secure himself when working on deck, and the yachtsmen did not wear lifejackets or personal buoyance aids.

Lessons Learnt

3. While yachtsmen are operating on the deck of an underway yacht, they should always maintain effective communication and sharp alert to any situational changes. Extreme caution must be exercised to avoid stumbling, loss of balance, and falling overboard.

4. Crew, passengers, and persons on board open cruisers or similar types of vessels, where the risk of falling overboard is high, are recommended to wear lifejackets at all times in accordance with the Code of Practice¹.

5. The yachtsmen should always be familiar with the operation of the yachts and duly take into account the recommendations of the Owner's Safety Manual of their yachts, including suitably securing oneself while working on deck.

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Director of Marine

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¹ CODE OF PRACTICE ---- Safety Standards for Class IV Vessels, Section 2.6 of Chapter VI
https://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/lvs_cop4.pdf