

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 199/2022**

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

### **Fatal fire accident happened on a locally licensed fishing vessel**

#### **The Incident**

A fatal fire accident happened on a locally licensed wooden fishing vessel (*the vessel*) during a fishing operation in waters between Sanmen Islands, Huizhou and Mirs Bay, Shenzhen. On the day of the accident, the crew of *the vessel*, excluding the Chief Cook (C/C), were casting fishing nets at the stern of *the vessel*. Meanwhile, they heard the C/C suddenly shouting in the crew accommodation of *the vessel* that there was a fire. They went for a check and found the accommodation was on fire. The crew then tried to use the shipboard extinguishers to fight the fire but failed. Subsequently, the fire continued to spread and gradually intensified. With the fire growing out of control, all crew members jumped into the sea for survival. Eventually, one crew member died, and two crew members went missing. *The vessel* was also sunken on the same day.

2. The investigation identified that the contributory factors leading to the accident were that the fire might have been caused by overloaded electrical equipment, short circuits, or unextinguished cigarettes butts in the crew accommodation of *the vessel*; the crew lacked safety awareness of firefighting as the C/C, who first found the fire, might have failed to fight the fire immediately by using a portable extinguisher, and the crew also failed to put out the fire by using the emergency fire pump; some crew members neither wore life jackets nor released life rafts when abandoning *the vessel* and this lack of survival awareness reduced their chances of being rescued at sea; *the vessel* was not manned with a qualified coxswain and an engine operator, and her manning failed to fulfil the minimum requirements of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Certification and Licensing) Regulation; *the vessel* did not hold a valid Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao mobile fishing vessel licence when she was engaging in fishing operation in the waters of the Mainland, and her manning did not fulfil the

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minimum manning requirements of the “Law on the Administration of Fishery Crew” issued by Mainland China; and *the vessel* might not have been equipped with additional life-saving apparatus in accordance with the requirements of the “Certificate of Survey” when engaging in the fishing operation in the waters of the Mainland.

## **Lessons Learnt**

3. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar accidents in the future, fishery organisations and fishermen’s groups should understand the contributing factors and safety issues stated in the report to learn from the accident, and the owners and coxswains of fishing vessels should:

- (a) enhance crew training on board in fire prevention knowledge, emergency response to fire, and safe survival;
- (b) conduct proper maintenance of shipboard electrical circuits and electrical equipment in accordance with the requirements of “Local Fishing Vessel Electrical Safety”<sup>1</sup> ;
- (c) ensure that their fishing vessels hold valid Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao mobile fishing vessel licences and fulfil the minimum manning requirements of the Mainland and Hong Kong when operating in Mainland waters; and
- (d) ensure that the fishing vessels are equipped with adequate life-saving apparatus in accordance with the requirements of the “Certificate of Survey” issued by the Marine Department.

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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)