

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 36/2023

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Fatal man overboard accident on a locally licensed dumb lighter

The Incident

A locally licensed dumb lighter (*the vessel*) completed handling her cargo at the New Yau Ma Tei Public Cargo Working Area. The owner of *the vessel* (*the owner*) invited his friends to have dinner on board. One of his friends could not contact *the owner* by phone after returning home from the dinner. He then contacted a slinger (*the slinger*) who had left *the vessel* earlier after work and they returned to *the vessel* together to find *the owner*. After failing to find *the owner* on *the vessel*, *the slinger* informed the family of *the owner* to call the Police for help. Afterwards, firemen arrived at the scene for search and rescue. They then found *the owner* underwater near *the vessel*. *The owner* was rescued and sent to hospital where he was eventually certified dead.

2. The investigation revealed that the contributory factor leading to this fatal accident might be that *the owner* was affected by alcohol and possibly tripped over by the sundries on the deck when he was walking or standing on the deck passage after drinking, and thus lost his balance and fell into the sea. The survivability of *the owner* in the water was also greatly reduced due to the influence of alcohol, and he eventually drowned.

3. The investigation also revealed that *the owner* lacked personal safety awareness and did not realise the impact of drinking alcohol on his body balance and judgement. In particular, walking or standing on the deck passage of *the vessel* after drinking alcohol would increase the risk of falling into the water and drowning.

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Lessons Learnt

4. To avoid similar accidents in the future, shipowners and companies should enhance the safety awareness of the personnel on board, including reminding them to avoid drinking alcohol beverages on board, and keep deck passages clean and unobstructed.

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Government of the HKSAR

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