

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 58/2023**

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

### **Fatal accident happened while engaging in water skiing activity at sea**

#### **The Incident**

When an open cruiser (*the vessel*) was engaging in water skiing activity at sea, a water-skier towed by *the vessel (the water-skier)* fell into the water from a water ski board. The coxswain onboard steered *the vessel* backward in order to pull up *the water-skier*. At that moment, *the water-skier* was holding onto the stern boarding platform to avoid being pushed underneath *the vessel*. With the engine kept running, the coxswain attempted to pull *the water-skier* on board from the stern of *the vessel* but failed. As the coxswain intended to protect *the water-skier* from being injured by the rotating propeller, he jumped into the sea to rescue *the water-skier* but disappeared afterwards. After receiving the incident report, the rescue personnel arrived at the scene for search and rescue. The coxswain was found trapped in the water underneath *the vessel*. He was eventually rescued but was certified dead.

2. The investigation revealed the contributory factor leading to the incident was that *the vessel* failed to comply with the requirements of Section 89 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulations (Cap. 548F) (“the Regulation”) regarding control over water-skiing, i.e. when a local vessel being used for towing any person, its coxswain shall be accompanied by a person who is not below 18 years of age. The person shall also be assigned by the coxswain with the duty of informing the coxswain of any accident occurring to the person being towed, so that the coxswain can take appropriate actions as soon as possible to avoid worsening the situation.

3. The investigation also revealed that the coxswain carried out the rescue operation in haste, thus lacking sufficient safety awareness to prevent accidents from happening. The coxswain also did not take appropriate measures to protect persons in the water from being hit by the rotating propeller.

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## **Lessons Learnt**

4. To avoid similar incidents in future, owners and coxswains shall follow the requirements of the Regulation by assigning a person on board not below 18 years of age to inform the coxswain of any accident occurring to the person being towed. Coxswains should take appropriate actions immediately to avoid worsening the situation. Furthermore, owners should enhance the safety awareness of coxswains on handling incidents of persons falling overboard.

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

Marine Department  
Government of the HKSAR  
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