

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 124/2024

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Fatal fire accident happened on board a Chinese Mainland-registered river-trade container vessel while underway

The Incident

A Chinese Mainland-registered river-trade container vessel (*the vessel*) berthed alongside Kwai Chung Container Terminals. During the time, a crew member discovered that there was gas leak from the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) stove in the galley while preparing lunch on board. After lunch, *the vessel* departed from Kwai Chung Container Terminals, a sailor (*sailor A*) on board went to the galley to check and repair the LPG stove while another sailor (*sailor B*) was on the stern deck outside the galley. When *the vessel* was sailing across the waters near Tsing Yi South Bridge, a fire suddenly broke out in the galley. *Sailor B* and other crew member in the vicinity heard the news and rushed to the galley to put out the fire. After the fire was extinguished, it was found that both *sailor A* and *sailor B* got burnt. After the accident, both injured sailors were sent to local hospitals for treatment and were later transferred to Chinese Mainland hospitals for further treatment. Unfortunately, *sailor A* sustained serious injuries and was subsequently certified dead.

2. The investigation revealed that the contributory factors leading to the accident were that there were serious gas leaks from the LPG stove and cylinder in the galley due to improper maintenance or failure in meeting the safety standards; *sailor A* might not be aware that LPG could easily accumulate on the ground and might have neglected its flammable characteristic, therefore *sailor A* rashly ignited the stove for testing without confirming whether the galley space was safe and ultimately caused the fire, which showed that his safety awareness was insufficient; and the safety training on shipboard fire incidents and the use of LPG was ineffective.

Lessons Learnt

3. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar accidents in the future, owners and coxswains should strengthen the safety management of LPG stove and cylinder in the galley and conduct regular inspections; and enhance the crew's safety training on shipboard fire incidents and the use of LPG so as to raise their safety awareness.

Mr. Q. SHI
Director of Marine (Ag.)

Marine Department
Government of the HKSAR
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