

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 194/2024**

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

### **Fatal fire accident happened on a locally licensed open cruiser**

#### **The Incident**

A locally licensed open cruiser (*the vessel*) was found on fire in the waters off east of Lamma Island. When the fireboat arrived at the scene, *the vessel* was found stranded on a nearby beach. After the fire was put out, *the vessel* was severely burnt and blackened, and *the vessel's* coxswain (*the coxswain*) was found missing. Subsequently, the Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre initiated a maritime search and rescue operation to locate *the coxswain*. Eventually, rescue personnel found *the coxswain* on board *the vessel*, his body was severely charred and he was confirmed dead.

2. As there were no witnesses to the accident, the investigation deduced that *the vessel's* petrol outboard engine (*the outboard engine*) malfunctioned while *the vessel* was underway. *The coxswain* did not seek assistance and attempted to inspect and repair *the outboard engine* alone at sea. Meanwhile, *the outboard engine* might have overheated or sparks from the battery might have ignited the petrol stored in a nearby oil can, which further ignited the combustible materials on *the vessel* and ultimately led to the fire. In the fire, *the coxswain* suffered burns and might have inhaled smoke, causing him to collapse on *the vessel* and was unable to escape into the sea in time.

## **Lessons Learnt**

3. To avoid similar incidents in future, owners and operators of pleasure vessels should seek assistance promptly if they encounter engine problems during voyages. They should also carry out regular and appropriate repair and maintenance of the engines to ensure their proper functioning. In addition, the safety precautions stipulated in the *Code of Practice*<sup>1</sup> should be adhered to for storing and using petrol on board correctly to prevent fire hazards. In the event of a fire, they should extinguish it as quickly as possible under safe conditions. If the fire is out of control, they should evacuate immediately and seek assistance from relevant government departments as soon as possible.

**Mr S.F. WONG**  
**Director of Marine**

Marine Department

Government of the HKSAR

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 2 “Safety Precautions on the Proper Storage and Use of Petrol” of the Code of Practice for Safety Standards for Class IV Vessels (*Code of Practice*) issued by the Marine Department.