

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 22/2025

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

A fatal man overboard accident occurred on board a locally licensed yacht in Sai Kung waters

The Incident

A fatal man overboard accident occurred on board a locally licensed auxiliary powered yacht (*the yacht*) during a sailing race in the waters off Ma Tsai Pai, Sai Kung. On the day of the incident, a crew member responsible for maintaining the balance of *the yacht* accidentally lost his footing and fell into the sea when walking from the port side to the starboard side. He was still conscious when falling into the sea and was able to swim towards a lifebuoy, but he later became unconscious in the water. Subsequently, he was rescued and was taken to Marine Police station. He was then airlifted to a hospital by helicopter for treatment. However, he was confirmed dead on the same day.

2. The investigation identified that the crew member might have underestimated the potential risks of the sailing race and did not wear a standard lifejacket or similar buoyancy aids. In particular, when *the yacht* was changing her heading, he had to quickly move from one side to another on the narrow and inclined deck, which in turn increased the risk of slipping and falling into the sea. The crew member might also have underestimated the impact of colder weather on his body. Specifically, his mobility and survivability might have been weakened after falling into the sea, thereby increasing the risk of drowning.

3. The investigation also identified that *the yacht's* lifelines did not meet the requirements stipulated in the Racing Rules of Sailing 2021-2024, i.e. the lower lifeline around *the yacht* was not taut as required. However, there is insufficient evidence to show that the loosely tied lifeline was related to the overboard accident.

Lessons Learnt

4. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar accidents in the future, when sailing boats participate in sailing races or similar activities, their owners and participants should learn lessons from this accident and note the following:

- (i) to strictly comply with the race rules to ensure lifelines on board are taut as required and their installation meets the related requirements; and
- (ii) to take appropriate safety measures, such as wearing lifejackets or buoyancy aids, so as to avoid drowning in case of falling into the sea.

Mr. S.F. WONG
Director of Marine

Marine Department

Government of the HKSAR

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