

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 21/2025

(Marine Industrial Safety)

A fatal accident happened on board a locally licensed dumb lighter in the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter

The Incident

A locally licensed dumb lighter (*the lighter*) was berthed in the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter and lifted a floating pontoon (*the pontoon*) from the sea into the cargo hold of *the lighter* (*the hold*) for maintenance. After *the pontoon* was successfully lifted from the sea and securely placed into *the hold*, a long steel ladder (*the ladder*) was positioned adjacent to *the pontoon*, connecting the bottom of *the hold* to the portside hatch coaming of *the lighter*, serving as the access between the bottom of *the hold*, the main deck of *the pontoon* and the main deck of *the lighter*. Around 10 minutes later, the person in charge of the lifting operation, who was on another dumb lighter berthed alongside *the lighter*, heard the sound of an object falling to the bottom of *the hold*. Subsequently, he found an unconscious worker lying face up and bleeding at the bottom of *the hold* under *the ladder*. The injured worker was rescued on the scene and was then sent to a local hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, he sustained serious injuries and was subsequently certified dead.

2. The investigation revealed that the contributory factors leading to the accident were that the person in charge of the lifting operation failed to comply with the requirements stipulated in the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Works) Regulation (*the Regulation*) (Cap. 548I), such as providing safe means of access to the workplace for the persons employed; the lifting operation site on *the lighter* lacked management and supervision; no works supervisor was on site to oversee the lifting operation of *the pontoon* as required under *the Regulation*; and the worker lacked safety awareness and did not realise the hazards of using the unsafe ladder, which might have led to the risk of falling from a height. The investigation also revealed that the lifting operation of *the pontoon* did not comply with the requirement stipulated in *the Regulation*, which mandates that persons involved in cargo handling must hold valid safety training certificates.

Lessons Learnt

3. To prevent the recurrence of similar accidents in the future, the person in charge of works must strictly adhere to the requirements of the *Regulation*, including providing safe means of access to the workplace for the persons employed, ensuring that persons involved in cargo handling hold valid safety training certificates, and arranging for a works supervisor to oversee the site, thereby enhancing the management and supervision. In addition, the person in charge of works must strengthen safety training for persons employed to enhance their safety awareness.

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