

# LOCAL VESSELS SAFETY BULLETIN NO. 02/2025

## SINKING ACCIDENT INVOLVING LOCAL FISHING VESSEL

28 October 2025

To: Shipowners, Operators, Agents, Coxswains, Engine Operators,  
and Crew of Hong Kong Local Vessels

### WHAT HAPPENED

A recent fatal accident occurred on a wooden fishing vessel which had been moored in Aberdeen West Typhoon Shelter (AWTS) for a prolonged period. The owner boarded the vessel to address water ingress problem in the compartments. Approximately 20 minutes later, the vessel sank with stern up, due to accumulation of water ingress and breach of bulkhead watertightness. The owner was rescued by a nearby vessel but sadly, he passed away in hospital.

### PROBLEMS WITH SUCH VESSEL

Leaving a vessel unattended for a prolonged period can lead to several significant problems, particularly highlighted by this incident:

- Water Ingress

Without regular inspection and maintenance, rain water or wave water can enter the hull through not properly closed or failed weathertight openings or through corroded or rotten hull, and accumulate inside the compartments. This unnoticed ingress can compromise the vessel's buoyancy and stability.

- Loss of Stability

Breach of watertightness in watertight bulkheads due to unknot properly closed/failed watertight doors or cracked/damaged watertight bulkhead will lead to shifting of accumulated ingress water to one side of the vessel. In this incident, water shifted to the forward side and compromised the longitudinal stability leading to the vessel's bow sunk first.

- Omission of Inspection and Maintenance

Extended periods without inspection can lead to neglect of essential operational and maintenance tasks, such as closing all the hatches, weathertight doors and portholes, repairing leaks due to failed closing appliance or damaged structures, etc. This

neglect can accumulate minor problems and lead to catastrophic failure.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

Water ingress into the hull is a serious matter because it will reduce the vessel's stability. And when a vessel experiences a loss of stability, capsizing or sinking can occur rapidly, posing a significant risk to those on board. To prevent such incident from happening again, all concerned parties should implement the following measures for vessels under prolonged idling :

1. Perform periodical routine inspection of weathertight integrity of a vessel, i.e. all exposed doors, windows, portholes and hatches, to ensure that they can be closed effectively;
2. Perform periodical routine inspection of watertight bulkheads in the hull to see if watertight doors and cable/pipe penetrations remain effective and if water is collected at the bottom;
3. Whenever large amount of water accumulated is noticed, seek professional assistance. You won't know when the vessel will capsize;
4. Avoid working alone when addressing flooding or stability issues. Ensure at least one additional person is present to provide immediate assistance or initiate emergency protocols when necessary;
5. Company should provide proper training to crew in flooding prevention, emergency response, and safety awareness;
6. Provide easily accessible life-saving equipment and maintain unblocked escape routes on board; and
7. Conduct risk assessments for vessels moored for long periods to identify potential flooding or hull damage, especially, considering environmental factors like weather, waves, and vessels movement.

The sinking of this wooden fishing vessel due to water ingress and stability loss demonstrates the critical importance of regular inspections and maintenance. It is essential for vessel owners to prioritize the upkeep of their vessels, ensuring they remain safe and seaworthy.

## **LOCAL VESSELS SAFETY SECTION**

### **MARINE DEPARTMENT**

### **GOVERNMENT OF THE HKSAR**