

# Marine Department strengthens publicity of Marine Safety (Alcohol and Drugs) Ordinance ahead of Dragon Boat Festival

With the Dragon Boat Festival approaching and dragon boat races being held, the Marine Department (MD) reminded the organisers of dragon boat races and relevant associations at a preparation meeting for a major dragon boat race today (May 22) that the Marine Safety (Alcohol and Drugs) Ordinance (the Ordinance) has been in force since January 1 this year to regulate drink and drug boating in Hong Kong waters, thereby enhancing marine safety and protecting the safety of persons on board a vessel. The MD emphasised that the Ordinance applies to all vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters, including non-mechanised vessels such as dragon boats and kayaks.

The Ordinance stipulates that any person involved in operating a vessel or performing designated duties relating to the safety and security of a vessel, or the protection of the marine environment, commits an offence if he/she is under the influence of alcohol or drugs to such an extent that he/she becomes incapable of having proper control of the vessel concerned or performing designated duties properly, or has an alcohol level exceeding the prescribed limit in the person's body, or has any specified illicit drugs in the person's body. Upon conviction, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for three years as well as disqualification from operating or performing designated duties on board or operating a vessel in Hong Kong waters for life.

A spokesman for the MD said, "As everyone on board a dragon boat (including the helmsman, drummer, and paddlers) must work together to propel and navigate the boat, they are all considered as persons operating the boat under the Ordinance and are subject to the regulation of the Ordinance." The MD urges members of the public not to paddle dragon boats while under the influence of alcohol or drugs in order to avoid accidents caused by impaired judgment and alertness, which may endanger their own safety and the safety of other people at sea.

The MD has earlier briefed 11 sports associations or dragon boat competition organisations, and issued letters to organisers of dragon boat races, explaining the scope of the Ordinance. In order to strengthen publicity on the Ordinance, the MD also displayed banners at popular dragon boat venues, such as Shing Mun River in Sha Tin and typhoon shelters, as well as distributed posters and leaflets to dragon boat associations and paddlers.

Water sports are popular among the public in summer. The MD therefore also reminds members of the public that individuals operating non-motorised vessels such as kayaks are subject to regulations under the Ordinance as

well. Regular swimmers using buoyancy devices such as swimming rings and floating beds in a normal manner are not considered as operating vessels.

The MD is actively helping members of the public to better understand the contents of the Ordinance through a series of promotional activities, including distributing leaflets to the public, displaying posters and banners at water sports hotspots, organising briefings for maritime industry players and stakeholders, and broadcasting a TV Announcement in the Public Interest (API) and a radio API. Members of the public are welcome to browse the [MD's website](#) for details of the Ordinance.