

Seminar promotes water sport safety (with photos)

To raise the public's awareness of the importance of water sport safety, the Marine Department (MD), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong Observatory, the Government Flying Service and the Hong Kong, China Waterski Association co-organised the 2024 Safety Afloat Educational Seminar at the Hong Kong Science Museum today (May 7). Deputy Director of Marine Mr Shi Qiang spoke at the seminar and reminded the public to be well prepared before participating in water sport activities to ensure safety.

The MD reminded coxswains and vessel operators to make appropriate preparations before setting sail for water sport activities. They should plan their voyages and consider whether the vessel's structure is suitable for the water area and the activity to be conducted. There should be enough experienced crew members on board to guide passengers to follow safety instructions when engaging in water sport activities. Coxswains and vessel operators should also familiarise themselves with all safety precautions and contingency measures, check the vessel's structure and its safety equipment on board before setting sail, and know the location of the equipment and how to use it. They should also collect sufficient weather forecast information for the whole voyage and take heed of weather conditions or warnings.

Pleasure vessel operators should navigate carefully when entering shallow waters, speed-restricted zones or waters with others taking part in water sport activities. Vessel operators should strengthen lookouts and take appropriate safety measures to avoid any possible risk if they see other water sport activities nearby.

The MD also reminds the public that they should only hire pleasure vessels endorsed by the MD to be let for hire or carry passengers for reward and check the endorsed list of vessels by scanning the QR code posters displayed in public piers and popular marine tourism spots. TV and radio announcements in the public interest will be broadcast on various platforms to assist the public in identifying endorsed pleasure vessels.

Meanwhile, swimmers should swim at beaches with lifeguards on duty, stay within the bathing beach area and avoid swimming near anchored vessels. They should understand their physical abilities, take care of their children and avoid swimming alone or away from companions. They should also refrain from swimming right after consumption of food, alcohol or drugs. To prevent accidents, divers shall observe relevant guidelines and maintain safety awareness at all times. In particular, while surfacing, divers should pay special attention to the surrounding environment and the movement of vessels in the vicinity. Proper buoyant signals should be displayed.

As the typhoon season is approaching, the MD urges owners, coxswains and persons-in-charge of local vessels, including pleasure vessels, to remain

vigilant against the threat of typhoons. Before the onset of a typhoon, appropriate precautionary measures must be taken to ensure the safety of persons on board and vessels.

In order to remind members of the public of water sport safety, pamphlets on "Observing the safety advice, Enjoying the fun at sea" have been produced and distributed to the public to provide safety advice about various water sport activities to prevent accidents. The MD will continue its promotional and educational efforts to enhance the safety awareness of the public.

Officers of the Marine Police and the MD will step up their patrol operations in speed-restricted zones, waters in the vicinity of popular beaches and water sport sites, and will take action against any illegal or reckless boating activities. The LCSD lifeguards will also keep an eye out for boating activities at beaches and the adjacent waters. They will alert officers of the MD and the Marine Police if law enforcement actions against offenders are required.

The MD hopes that the industry and the public will co-operate in promoting water sport safety, so that everyone can enjoy pleasant leisure water sport activities.

