

Marine traffic control and safety measures to be followed at New Year's Eve countdown celebrations

With regard to the New Year's Eve countdown celebrations to be held by the Hong Kong Tourism Board on December 31, the Marine Department (MD) will implement marine traffic control and strengthen the inspection of spectator vessels on the event day to ensure that safety requirements are met.

Closed Areas will be established in two stages on the event day in the waters where barges for the fireworks display will be anchored. All vessels will be prohibited from entering these designated areas. The Closed Area in the waters off the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai will be established from 1pm on the event day to about 5am on the following day (January 1), while the Closed Area in the waters off the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui will be established from 11pm to about 1am on the following day. A Restricted Area will be established in the Central Harbour from 11pm to about 1am on the following day. Other than authorised vessels, no vessels will be allowed to enter. Scheduled ferry vessels with permission may continue services until 11.40pm.

For landside crowd control, all public landing steps within the Restricted Area will be progressively closed temporarily starting from 10pm on the event day to about 1am on the following day. Buffer Zones at Kowloon Public Pier, Kwun Tong Public Pier and Central Piers 9 and 10 will be established immediately after the event for safe and orderly disembarkation of passengers.

In addition, to ensure vessels disperse in an orderly manner, the Eastern and Western Cordon Lines of the Restricted Area will be lifted in stages after the event. The Western Cordon Line will be lifted first at about 1am on January 1. Spectator vessels behind the Western Cordon Line and those wishing to move to the east must follow the instructions of officers from the MD and the Police at the scene. The Eastern Cordon Line will be lifted later depending on traffic conditions in Victoria Harbour. It is anticipated that the Restricted Area will be lifted by about 1.15am.

Officers from the MD and the Police will also maintain order at major landing facilities after the event. In order to ensure the smooth and safe disembarkation of passengers, coxswains and crew members should remind passengers to pack their personal belongings early before the vessels arrive alongside the landing steps, as well as assist passengers to disembark. Coxswains and passengers should follow the guidance of the MD and the Police at the scene.

The MD and the Marine Police will also strengthen law enforcement,

especially on speeding and overloading. Coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels should check again and reconfirm that the operating licence, the certificate of survey and the third party risk insurance are valid before setting sail.

Officers from the MD will strengthen the inspection of spectator vessels. Requirements include providing sufficient life-saving appliances on board, ensuring that children wear a lifejacket at all times and that coxswains keep a passenger and crew list on board.

If any vessel fails to meet these requirements, inspecting officers will issue directions at the scene and request the person-in-charge of the vessel to take remedial action. If the person-in-charge of the vessel refuses to comply with the directions, the department will take the necessary follow-up action, such as prohibiting the vessel from departing or considering prosecution.

MD Notice No. 196 of 2018 on the marine traffic control and safety measures has been issued and is available for viewing on the MD's website (www.mardep.gov.hk).