

Seminar promotes water sport safety (with photos)

To enhance public awareness of water sport safety, the Marine Department (MD), the Hong Kong Police Force and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) held the 2019 Safety Afloat Educational Seminar at the Hong Kong Science Museum today (May 21). The Deputy Director of Marine, Mr Wong Sai-fat, spoke at the seminar and reminded the public to be well prepared before participating in water sports to ensure safety.

The MD reminded coxswains and vessel operators to make appropriate preparations before setting sail for water sports. They should plan the voyages and consider whether the vessel's structure is suitable for the 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 sports. Coxswains and vessel operators should also familiarise themselves with all the 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.

Coxswains operating pleasure vessels should navigate carefully when entering shallow waters, speed-restricted zones or waters in which others are engaging in water sports. Vessel operators should take appropriate safety measures to avoid any possible risk if they see other water sport activities nearby.

The MD has implemented a new regulation on small open cruisers by introducing conditions in the operating licences of these vessels to impose restrictions on their operating area and to forbid modification of hull structure or installed engine. All persons on board should also wear a lifejacket at all times.

Meanwhile, people should swim at beaches with lifeguards on duty, stay inside the 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 should observe relevant guidelines and maintain safety awareness at all times. In particular, while surfacing, special attention should be paid to the environment and 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 to the threat of typhoons. Before the onset of a typhoon, appropriate precautionary measures must be taken to ensure the safety of

vessels and persons on board.

The MD will continue its promotional and educational work to inform the public about safety while engaging in water sports. To further enhance public awareness of the use of local vessels during water sports, the MD has produced promotional leaflets to provide safety advice concerning various water sports.

Officers of the Marine Police and the MD will step up their patrols 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. LCSD lifeguards will also keep an eye out for boating activities at beaches and adjacent waters. They will alert officers of the MD and the Marine Police to take law enforcement action against offenders when necessary.

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

