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Government Reminds of Mandatory Reporting Requirement for All Marine Accidents and Incidents

The Marine Safety Investigation and Reporting Authority (MSIRA) is reminding vessel operators and maritime stakeholders across the Virgin Islands that reporting marine accidents and incidents is a legal requirement under the Virgin Islands Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations, 2020.

Chief Marine Accident Investigator, Mr. Jerome Padmore, explained that all marine accidents or incidents connected to the operation of a vessel must be reported to MSIRA as soon as practicable and by the quickest means available. He stated: “Reporting is not limited to major incidents. Near-misses and minor occurrences can provide critical information that helps prevent more serious accidents.”

According to Mr. Padmore, the obligation to report rests with the Master of the vessel, or in their absence, the senior surviving officer, as well as the owner, manager, or operator. He said relevant authorities may also be required to report where applicable. “Failure to report, delays in reporting, or the submission of inaccurate information are breaches of the Regulations and can delay investigations and hinder efforts to improve maritime safety,” the Chief Marine Accident Investigator pointed out.

Mr. Padmore emphasised the importance of reporting. “Marine accident reporting is not about assigning fault. It is about learning, improving, and strengthening the systems that keep our waters safe,” he said.

Operators are reminded that failure to report an accident without reasonable cause is an offence under the law. Persons required to report who fail to do so, or who fail to provide the required information, may be liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to \$10,000.

Highlighting the broader impact of compliance, Mr. Padmore added, “Every report helps us better understand risks across our maritime space and improve how we respond to them.”

MSIRA has launched a public awareness campaign to improve reporting across the Virgin Islands. The initiative focuses on educating vessel operators, charter companies, visiting charters, and bareboat operators on their responsibilities, while reinforcing the importance of timely and accurate reporting.

“Through this campaign, we want to build a culture of transparency, compliance, and responsibility,” Mr. Padmore said. “When stakeholders act promptly, we all benefit from safer waters.”

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About:

The Marine Safety Investigation and Reporting Authority (MSIRA) operates under the Premier’s Office and is the official body responsible for the independent investigation of marine accidents and incidents within the territorial waters of The Virgin Islands. Guided by the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations, 2020 and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Casualty Investigation Code, MSIRA’s primary objective is to enhance maritime safety through fact-based investigations, the identification of safety issues, and the issuance of recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. MSIRA investigations do not seek to apportion blame or establish liability.