



# South African Maritime Safety Authority

Ref: SM6/5/2/1  
SM20/11/1

Date: 7 February 2017

## Marine Notice No 6 of 2017

### Lessons Learnt from Recent Casualties

TO ALL SHIP OPERATORS, MASTERS, CREW, SMALL VESSEL SKIPPERS, SMALL VESSEL ASSOCIATIONS AND PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

#### *Summary*

A fatality occurred after a sailing vessel mast collided with overhead powercables.

#### **Collision between Pleasure craft sailing vessel mast and overhead 11kVA power cables resulting in fatality.**

On Thursday afternoon the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the Hobiecat proceeded onto the Kleinrivier (Hermanus) lagoon with 4 persons aboard. The skipper was familiar with the waters of the lagoon and river. At approximately 18:11, witnesses heard a loud crackling and saw sparks flying at a position approximately 5km downstream from Stanford on the Kleinrivier, when the mast of the Hobiecat came into contact with the Eskom 11kVA power cables. The skipper, who had been touching the mast at the time of contact with the cables, was thrown into the water. The 3 minor occupants of the Hobiecat jumped into the water and shouted for help. Several pleasure craft were in the area and the injured party was transported to a nearby slipway where he received medical treatment immediately from a paramedic and doctor who were also on the river at the time. He could not be revived. He was pronounced dead on the scene and the local (Standford) Police were called. Police docket 145/12/2016 was opened in connection with the accident.

#### **Contributing factors to this incident should be highlighted as:**

- Exceptionally high water levels in river/lagoon because the cut has not breached to the ocean from the lagoon.
- Low power cables across the river.
- Lack of signage/precaution wires.
- Lack of awareness of hazards.
- Ferrous mast capable of conducting electricity with no insulator installed.

#### **Recommendation:**

- It is recommended by the authority that yacht and powerboat clubs on inland waters take note and raise awareness within their circle of influence in and around this accident to prevent recurrence.
- It is recommended that local municipalities and governing bodies for inland waters review signage and precautions where power cables are suspended above navigable waters.
- It is recommended that yacht owners and sailing vessel owners take cognizance of the hazards associated with overhead power cables, especially when approaching with ferrous mast without an insulator.

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