

"SEA SMOOTH"

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
STATEMENT OF THE MASTER  
TAKEN AT HONG KONG ON  
4 OCTOBER 2012

**LAI SAI MING**

Will state

1. I was born on [REDACTED] and I am [REDACTED] years old.
2. I make this statement in relation to the collision between SEA SMOOTH and LAMMA IV on 1 October 2012.
3. I started my career at sea in 1981 as a Sailor on board ferries for the Hong Kong and Yaumatei Ferry. In 1994, I was promoted to First Officer, and in 1997, I was promoted to Captain. I have served as Captain on local ferries ever since.
4. I obtained my Hong Kong certificate of competency as Master for vessels of 60 gross tons and less, certificate number 47022, in January 1985. On 28 October 1997, my certificate was endorsed, permitting me to sail as Master on board vessels of 300 tons and less. I hold appropriate certificates for training in use of radar, life saving appliances, fire fighting appliances, first aid, and radio. The certificate is valid until 9 March 2023.
5. I have been one of the captains on board SEA SMOOTH since June 2012. Prior to that, I was Captain on board ferries operated by Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry Company Limited, running various routes within Hong Kong waters.
6. I usually work one day on, one day off. During the 24 hours that I am on duty, I rest when the ferry is not operating.
7. My responsibilities on board are the safe navigation of the ferry and supervision of the crew and passengers. I am in charge of the vessel and in overall command.

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Initials

8. SEA SMOOTH is a 2002, Hong Kong built ferry. She is constructed of glass reinforced plastic (GRP), and has a gross tonnage of 274 and net tonnage of 120. She is licensed to carry 381 passenger on two decks.
9. She is a catamaran, with a length overall of 28 metres, breadth 8 metres and depth of 3.1 metres. She is equipped with twin Cummins diesel engines, each producing 969 kW, and each driving a fixed propeller. She has a speed of about 27 knots. She has twin rudders. She is very manoeuvrable.
10. SEA SMOOTH has two accommodation decks, the main deck and the upper deck. The wheelhouse is located at the forward end of the upper deck, and is raised slightly above the level of the upper deck. Passengers do not have access to the wheelhouse.
11. The wheelhouse is equipped with a centreline conning chair, which I usually sit in when navigating the ferry. Forward of the chair is the helm and compass and the throttle controls for the twin engines. All the wheelhouse instruments and controls are contained within a console, forward of the conning chair. The console contains a radar, gauges for the main and auxiliary engines, an AIS, the whistle controls and the CCTV screen. All the navigation aids are accessible and visible from the conning chair. The switches for the navigation lights are located about 2 to 3 steps away from the conning chair.
12. The CCTV system has cameras at the gangway, the stern and in the engine rooms.
13. Also within reach of the conning chair is a VHF radio and a SSB radio, which we use to communicate with the Company.
14. Just to port of the conning chair is another chair, which the Engineer sometimes sits in during voyages. From that chair he can monitor the main and auxiliary engine gauges which show temperatures and pressures.
15. Against the aft bulkhead of the wheelhouse, on the port side, is a fitted bench. This bench is usually used by the sailors during the voyage. The bench is the same height as the conning chair, and there is a good view through the

wheelhouse windows from that position. The Engineer would usually sit on a chair next to the bench.

16. The wheelhouse windows are sloped, and follow the shape of the wheelhouse. In my experience, the view from the conning chair is good. I have to lean forward slightly to see the bow of the ferry, but the general view ahead is good.
17. There are doors on the port and starboard side of the wheelhouse that lead to small bridge wings. A manoeuvring station with controls for the rudders and engines is fitted on each bridge wing.
18. On 30 September, the day before the incident, it was a day off duty for me. I had been on duty on 29 September, and the relieving crew arrived on board SEA SMOOTH on the morning of 30 September. I handed over to the relieving master, and went home. I had rested during the night, but after I arrived at home, I went to sleep at about 08:00, waking up at about 12:30. I had a relaxing day, and went to sleep at about 23:00.
19. On 1 October, I woke at about 06:20, and went to Central Pier to rejoin SEA SMOOTH. As usual, SEA SMOOTH was berthed alongside for the night. I arrived on board at about 07:30, and took over command of the ferry from the previous master. The Engineer and two Sailors also joined the ferry with me at about 07:30.
20. The other master told me that everything was normal, and the ferry was operating well. There were no deficiencies on board. After discussing the condition of the ferry with the other master, I made an inspection of the vessel. I checked the safety equipment and life saving appliances. I also checked the passenger cabins, and made sure they were clean and ready to take passengers. I carry out these checks every time I board the vessel.
21. I ordered the Engineer to check the machinery, and to report to me. He told me that everything was working well. I then gave a short briefing to the crew members before proceeding to the wheelhouse.

22. In the wheelhouse, I checked all the navigational aids, including the radar, steering controls and AIS. All were working well.
23. Our first sailing for passengers was due at 08:40.
24. Once all the checks had been made, we departed Central Pier, and moved to Cheung Sha Wan to take on bunkers. The Engineer was in charge of this operation. Once bunkering was complete, we returned to Central Pier for our first run to Peng Chau with passengers.
25. We departed Central Pier at about 08:40, and began the day's work. The trip to Peng Chau took about 25 minutes. We then sailed back to Central Pier and followed the schedule to sail to and from Lamma Island. Each trip from Central Pier to Lamma Island takes about 20 – 25 minutes at a speed of about 20-22 knots. If the current is against us, we sometimes have to make a speed of about 23 knots. The schedule allows 30 minutes for each trip.
26. Throughout the day, we made our scheduled trips to and from Lamma Island. We keep in contact with the Company by SSB radio. On 1 October, we performed a voyage to Peng Chau as mentioned above and six round voyages between Lamma Island and Central Pier.
27. The weather throughout the day was generally fine, with light winds. Visibility was good.
28. Throughout the day, the radar set was running. I usually kept the radar on the 0.75 miles range scale. The radar was working well, and was showing target clearly. The VHF radio was set to channel 14.
29. At about 17:00, as it started getting darker, I switched on the ferry's navigation lights, including the yellow flashing light. These stayed switched on for the rest of the night.
30. I have navigated SEA SMOOTH from Central Pier to Lamma Island hundreds of times. I navigate by sight. I use landmarks and navigation marks to navigate.

When I am navigating, I sit in the conning chair, steering and adjusting the engine throttles as necessary. I mostly navigate visually, and I only occasionally glance at the radar.

31. The incident voyage started when we departed Central Pier No. 4 on schedule at about 20:00. On departure, all the navigation aids were working, the radar was set to the 0.75 miles range, and the navigation lights were showing. The weather was fine. Visibility was good, about 6 miles or more.
32. About 3 – 4 minutes after leaving the pier, the Engineer and two Sailors came to the wheelhouse. The sailors sat on the bench, which is fitted at the port side, aft of the wheelhouse. From that position, the Sailors helped keep look-out. The Engineer sat on a chair next to the bench and entered the details in the vessel's log book, which includes the departure time, the number of passengers on board, the weather conditions and the visibility.
33. At night time the wheelhouse is dark. After leaving Central Pier, I switched off the CCTV screen. The only lights in the wheelhouse were from the radar, the compass and the engine gauges. These are all fitted with a dimmer switch, which I turned down as much as possible, so that there was hardly any light in the wheelhouse.
34. After clearing Central Pier, there are speed restrictions within Victoria Harbour, so I kept the ferry's speed at less than 15 knots. The area of 15 knots restrictions ends at the Easterly Cardinal buoy marking the southern fairway. On passing this buoy I increased to our service speed of about 21 – 23 knots. The "SEA SMOOTH" is permitted to proceed at a maximum speed of 35 knots in this area.
35. I navigated through the Sulphur Channel and south of Green Island. This was my usual route to Lamma Island.
36. In this area there were many small boats and yachts heading towards Victoria Harbour for the fireworks display which was due that night. Most of the small crafts were going through the Sulphur Channel.

37. I had to alter course and reduce speed on a number of occasions, perhaps about 2 – 3 times, for some of the small crafts. I cannot now recall the exact details of the manoeuvres.
38. As I navigated through the Sulphur Channel, I could see Lamma Island ahead, so I knew that the visibility was good.
39. I crossed the Western Fairway at right angles to the traffic lanes, to a point north of Lamma Anchorage. I then altered course to port, to pass through the anchorage.
40. By this time, we were clear of the small recreational crafts heading for Victoria Harbour.
41. There were 4 – 5 ships at anchor in Lamma Anchorage. I adjusted my course as necessary to avoid them, but keeping my heading in general to about 180°. The weather and visibility were good, so I did not look at the compass or radar very often.
42. I could see the beacon off Shek Kok Tsui. The beacon has a bright white flashing light. I planned to pass about 10 ship's lengths, about 300 metres, off the beacon as usual, before altering course gradually to port, to head for Yung Shue Wan. This was my usual route. This is also the usual route for all the ferries running from Central to Yung Shue Wan on Lamma Island.
43. As I passed through the anchorage I noticed that the tidal stream was setting to the east. It was quite strong, probably about 1 knot.
44. Once we were clear of the anchorage there were no other ships or small boats ahead of us. There was a very bright light at the entrance to the Lamma power station typhoon shelter, and other usual shore lights and lights from the power station, but other than those, I could see no other lights or vessels.

45. As we were almost abeam of the beacon off Shek Kok Tsui, the Engineer and two Sailors left the wheelhouse to prepare for our arrival at Yung Shue Wan. This was the routine they usually followed.
46. Once we were abeam of the beacon, I started slowly altering course to port, heading to pass off the beacon O Tsai Pai.
47. My normal approach is to pass about 400 – 500 metres west of O Tsai Pai, and I adjust my course from the Shek Kok Tsui beacon as necessary. I usually start slowing the engines once the vessel is abeam of O Tsai Pai.
48. As I was still making my turn to port, towards O Tsai Pai, I suddenly saw a black shadow almost right ahead, and very close, about 2 – 3 ship's lengths. The black shadow appeared in the very bright light shining from the Lamma power station typhoon shelter. I knew at once it must be a small boat. I do not recall seeing any navigation lights on the other vessel.
49. I immediately put the engines to full astern, and the rudders to hard to starboard. The vessel's speed reduced rapidly, and we started altering course to starboard. Seconds later the collision occurred. The bow of our port hull collided with the port side of the other vessel, close to her stern.
50. The angle of blow was about 45°, with the port bow of SEA SMOOTH leading astern on the other vessel.
51. Both bridge wing doors were shut. I did not hear any whistles, or any warnings on the VHF before the collision. I did not have time to sound whistle signals after I saw the other vessel. I did not notice whether the other vessel was turning or altering her speed at the time of the collision.
52. The impact was hard. I was pushed forward into a leaning position by the collision, but I stayed in the chair and I was not thrown against the wheel or the console.

53. I was very shocked by what had happened. The other vessel had passed down our port side. I opened the port side bridge wing door. I could see the other vessel about 2 ship's lengths off our port quarter, slowly drifting further away. I shouted to them, and asked if everything was ok, but there was no response.
54. The other vessel was quite dark. There were no lights forward. I could see that she was a ferry boat, about the same length as SEA SMOOTH. She had two decks. The upper deck was dark, but the lower deck had cabin lights.
55. I went into the upper deck passenger cabin, and asked if any passengers were hurt. Some passengers on the upper deck told me that they were injured. I ordered the Engineer and the two Sailors to check whether any other passengers were hurt, and whether there was any damage to SEA SMOOTH.
56. The Engineer told me that the port bow was damaged, and there was water ingress to the port side hull spaces forward. The vessel also started listing to the port side and I ordered the passengers to put on their lifejackets.
57. The passenger cabin was chaotic. The passengers were very scared and frightened. They said we might sink and demanded that we should sail to the pier at Yung Shue Wan immediately which is not far away as they can see it through the passenger cabin windows. I was concerned about the safety of the other vessel, but I had to look after SEA SMOOTH and her passengers, so I decided to continue slowly to the pier at Yung Shue Wan, in order to make sure that my passengers were safe.
58. After I returned to the wheelhouse, I called MARDEP by VHF and also spoke to them with my mobile phone. I told them there had been a collision near Lamma Island and my vessel was damaged. I also told them there was water ingress into SEA SMOOTH and the situation was very dangerous just now so that I had to carry the passengers to the pier at Yung Shue Wan.
59. I also called the Company by SSB radio, and reported the incident to them. I told the Company similar to what I told MARDEP.

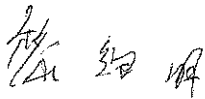


60. I do not remember the time we arrived at the pier at Yung Shue Wan. I could no longer see where LAMMA IV was by the time I reached Yung Shue Wan.
61. This statement was taken in Cantonese, and has been translated to me by Chan Chun Kei, Jennifer. The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**LAI SAI MING**

Signed:-

Date:



18 1. 2013