

Make a fire action plan

You can make the difference between safe escape and disaster - for you and your crew - by being prepared and making a fire action plan.



Here's how

- Make sure that you know your boat and make a fire action plan with everyone in the boat.
- For each sleeping position plan the best escape route and, if possible identify a second way out. If the routes are windows or roof-hatches, make sure they're big enough (see BSS Guide section 6.7) and that they open fully with ease. If they don't, provide a means to break the glass such as a small hammer. Footholds, ladders or other means of climbing out of the nominated roof-hatches must be quickly and easily accessible.
- Fire extinguishers should be sited where they can be at hand to help you escape.
- Know how to safely isolate the electrical, fuel and LPG installations in the event of a fire or gas leak.

You've done that, so now

- Keep all escape routes totally clear.
- Don't lock cabin doors or hatches using padlocks on the outside.
- Take note of nearby landmarks that may help identify your location in an emergency.

Be safe

- Check that all appliances are turned off and if possible, close the valve on the LPG cylinders before you go to bed or leave the boat.
- If you must use candles, place them upright, in suitable, stable holders; out of draughts and away from curtains and furnishings. Never leave a burning candle unattended. Make sure they are put out safely.
- Keep candles, matches, lighters and other sources of flame out of reach of children. Use only safety matches, vibration can ignite other types.
- Make sure cigarettes are put out safely - use metal ashtrays. Avoid falling asleep with a lit cigarette - never smoke in bed.
- Never leave a hot hob unattended especially when cooking with oil or fat.
- Don't fit curtains or fabrics over hob burners and don't dry tea towels or clothes over a cooker or hob.
- Don't over-bank solid fuel stoves overnight.
- Be careful when doing 'hot work' such as paint stripping, soldering, etc.

Maintenance for safety

- Practice 'good housekeeping' in order to reduce fire hazards. Regularly remove rubbish, oil and debris from all areas, especially the bilge. Discard oily waste responsibly.
- Create a safe store for goods such as diesel, coal, charcoal, wood, paint, solvents, adhesives or paraffin and ensure container lids are tight.
- When making changes to your boat i.e. upholstery fabrics, soft furnishings, foams, thermal insulation and galley surfaces, choose materials that offer good fire retardant qualities - ask your supplier for assurances.

What's more, you may consider...

... fitting a smoke alarm that meets British Standard BS5446 Part 1 and carries an approval mark such as the 'Kitemark'.

... fitting a gas and petrol vapour detector alarm in the bilge and even in the cabin space to give you early warnings of dangerous build-ups of explosive gases.

... fitting a suitable automatic fixed fire-extinguishing system for the engine compartment (Note: Halon is now banned internationally as an extinguishing medium. It must be replaced before Dec 31, 2003).



Boat Safety Scheme

Go boating - Stay safe



Avoiding Fire Afloat



This leaflet contains important information about keeping you, your family and friends safe from the risk of fire and explosion. Please read this leaflet, it could make all the difference - it could save your life.



What to do if fire breaks out



Hopefully it will never happen to you, but if it does...

Act quickly...

... have everybody ready to leave the craft and get them off the boat as soon as you can.

... call the Fire Brigade - they'll need your location, use landmarks if you can.

... turn off all gas cylinder valves and close any fuel system valves that are safe to reach. Better still, disconnect and remove the cylinder to a safe place, or, if you really have to, drop it over the side.

Then if you are confident and consider it safe to do so - tackle the fire using an extinguisher.

- If your efforts are not working or if you have emptied the extinguisher, get out closing the doors as you go, then stay out!
- Remember that even small fires spread very quickly. Keep your head low - smoke and fumes kill many more people than flames do - keep checking you're not in danger.
- **Never** let a fire block your exit.
- **Never** tackle a spreading fire.
- Do not spread the fire by moving anything that's alight.
- **Never** use extinguishers on chip pan fires - you will spread burning fat - use a fire blanket.



If in doubt get out and stay out.

- Warn the occupants of adjacent craft, the harbour, navigation authority and marina staff as appropriate.
- If the fire is in the engine compartment, to avoid a flashover explosion, don't fully open the hatch cover. If you believe it is safe to do so, crack open the hatch, aim and discharge the extinguisher. Or use the extinguisher through a 'keyhole' point without opening any covers.

Finally

Remember that the risk of accidents happening is greater when alcohol has been consumed.

Please also read the other 'Go Boating, Stay Safe' leaflets in this companion series to help you and your crew stay safe and avoid harming others.

The Boat Safety Scheme Guide and www.boatsafetyscheme.com contain details of the Scheme's requirements and recommendations concerning appliances and systems that use potentially hazardous fuels.

CoGDEM (Council Of Gas Detection And Environmental Monitoring) offers information on gas detection systems. Tel: 01462 434322 www.cogdem.co.uk

General fire safety advice can be found at www.firekills.gov.uk or from your local fire brigade.



What to do if fire breaks out

Portable fire extinguishers

Portable fire extinguishers provide an immediate response to a small fire and help you and your crew escape to a safe place.

Keep extinguishers in easy to reach positions close to escape routes and the fire risk points, e.g. the engine space and the galley.

Make sure all portable fire extinguishers carry certifying marks, such as the 'Kitemark' (see BSS Guide section 6.1).

Follow the manufacturers' instructions to keep extinguishers in good working order and consider having them serviced annually. Keep portable extinguishers out of direct sunlight otherwise plastic components may deteriorate.

Read the suppliers instructions and make sure that you know how to use the extinguishers.

Understand what types of fire your extinguishers can be used on.

Never use water extinguishers on electrical fires.

Never use carbon dioxide extinguishers inside an occupied cabin space.

Have a fire blanket conforming with BS EN 1869 or BS 6575 fixed near to the cooker and immediately to hand to deal with pan fires.

When on board, make sure that all fire extinguishers are in their correct places and not in storage.

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