



R B F & R S

news release

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STAY SAFE AFLOAT THIS BOAT FIRE SAFETY WEEK

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is supporting national Boat Fire Safety Week (31 May – 6 June) by urging the boat owners and people who hire boats for leisure to take steps to reduce the risk of a fire onboard. Boat Fire Safety Week is run in conjunction with the Boat Safety Scheme and the aim is to raise awareness of fire risk and safety issues amongst the boating community. Fire can spread quickly on a boat but working smoke alarms and detectors can help to keep those onboard safe. You can reduce your risk of a fire onboard by following these simple tips:

Alarms and detectors

- Optical sensor alarms with hush buttons and 'sealed for life' batteries are best for boats.
- Fit smoke alarms in places you will hear them clearly if they go off.
- Test the alarm when you board. Never disconnect it or remove working batteries.
- Fit an audible CO detector to alert you to any poisonous carbon monoxide.

Cooking and heating

- Never leave cooking unattended - turn it off until you come back.
- Keep fabrics away from cooking hobs to prevent them from catching fire.
- Check the flues and seals of coal and wood burning stoves for signs of leaks and blockages.
- Only use the fuel recommended by the heater manufacturer – other types may burn too hot.
- Ensure all hobs have shut-off or isolation valves.

Fuel and power

- Make sure you check and maintain your boat's fuel, gas and electrical systems regularly.
- Don't let oil or debris build up in the bilges.
- Take care when refuelling. Put out naked flames first. Turn off the engine and cooking before handling any fuel.
- Clean up leaks, spills and vapour immediately – they can ignite easily.
- Store gas cylinders outside, in a self-draining and fire resistant locker.
- Unplug electrical appliances when not in use or when you leave the boat.
- Never overload sockets – keep to one plug per socket.

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Firefighters from Caversham Road fire station (where the water rescue unit is based) will be offering free Boat Fire Safety Checks to people who live aboard their boats. The crew will be at the Thames and Kennet Marina from 10am – 4.30pm on Thursday 3 and Friday 4 June.

They will check existing smoke alarms to ensure they are in good working order, and fit ten-year battery smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors where necessary. The crew will also provide fire safety information, including how to make a potentially lifesaving fire escape plan, and give advice about storing hazardous substances correctly.

If you would like a FREE Boat Fire Safety Check, you can pre-book by calling 0118 932 2791 or come down to the marina on the day and ask one of the firefighters.

Jess James, Station Manager at Caversham Road fire station, said: “Fortunately, the number of boat fires in the UK is relatively low but when they do occur they can have devastating consequences. Boat Fire Safety Checks are completely free of charge and can help to dramatically reduce the risk of fire onboard.

“We hope that as many boat owners as possible will take advantage of the scheme and come and ask us for a safety check during Boat Fire Safety Week.”

If you are not available on either of the days but would still like a Boat Fire Safety Check, please contact Selina Sheikh, Community Safety Co-ordinator, on 0118 932 2791.

For more information about boat safety, visit www.boatsafetyscheme.com.

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