

# FIRE SAFETY ON BOATS



**FIRE  
KILLS**

**YOU CAN  
PREVENT IT**

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

In partnership with



## Did you know?

- **Fires on boats have killed 30 boaters in the last 20 years.**

Most fires are preventable. This leaflet provides tips and advice on how to protect your boat and crew from fire, and what to do should a fire break out.



# Alarms save lives

**Fire can spread quickly on a boat, even on water. Alarms can help keep your crew safe.**

## Smoke alarms

- Optical sensor alarms with hush buttons and 'sealed for life' batteries are best for boats. Visit [www.boatsafetyscheme.org/fire](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/fire) for advice and guidance.
- Fit alarms in places you will hear them clearly if they go off.
- Consider installing linked alarms that will go off at the same time.
- Test the alarm when you board and regularly when aboard. Never disconnect it or remove working batteries.

## Gas leak indicators

- Fit a bubble type gas leak indicator in the LPG cylinder locker.
- Push the gas leak indicator test button routinely to check for leaks in the gas system.

## Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms

- Fit a CO alarm to alert you of any poisonous carbon monoxide.
- Check your CO alarm is suitable for marine use and meets the EN50291-2 standard.
- Look out for any one of the approval symbols below when buying smoke and CO alarms.

### Top tip



**Fit alarms to stay safe**



British Standard  
Kitemark

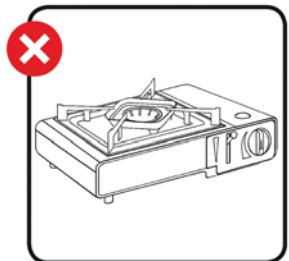


VdS

# Safe cooking and heating

## Turn cooking appliances off properly after use.

- Never leave cooking unattended. Turn things off until you come back.
- Take extra care when cooking with oil – it sets alight easily.
- Avoid cooking when tired. Remember, prescription drugs and alcohol can cause drowsiness.
- Keep the cooking area clean for safety – a build-up of grease could catch light.
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers, because they don't have a naked flame.
- Only use portable appliances onshore and don't change gas canisters inside the cabin or covered areas.
- Barbecues shouldn't be used on boats – hot charcoal gives off dangerous amounts of CO and blown embers could set your boat alight.
- Keep cabin ventilation clear to prevent a build-up of toxic CO.
- Try to keep fabrics away from cooking hobs to prevent them from catching fire.
- Damaged stoves and flues could burn too hot; check adjacent areas for heat damage. Have your chimney swept regularly.
- Only use the fuel recommended by the heater manufacturer. Other types may burn too hot.
- Dispose of embers carefully. If they're still warm they could cause a fire or build-up of CO.
- Ensure all hobs burners have a flame supervision device to shut-off the gas if the flame is blown out.



**Turn appliances off properly after use**

# Protecting the inside of your boat

## Cigarettes

**Dispose of cigarettes carefully. Put them out, right out.**

- Keep cigarettes or pipes away from anything that could catch fire, such as curtains.
- Never smoke when refuelling or changing a gas cylinder.
- Use a proper ashtray that will stay stable on the boat.
- Take extra care if you smoke when you're tired and never smoke in bed.
- Empty ashtrays regularly. A build-up of ash could catch fire.

## Furnishings

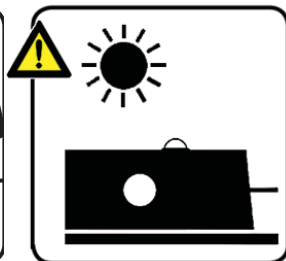
- Try to choose furniture that carries the fire-resistant label.
- Keep fabrics and paper away from anything hot like hobs, flues and light bulbs.
- Watch out for domed-decklights focussing light rays and causing heat damage or fires in strong sunlight.

## Candles

- Take extra care with lit candles. Don't leave them unattended.
- Only use secure holders, as a rocking boat or sudden jolt could tip candles over.



**Put cigarettes out properly**



# Fuel and power safety

**Make sure you check and maintain your boat's fuel, gas and electrical systems on a regular basis.**

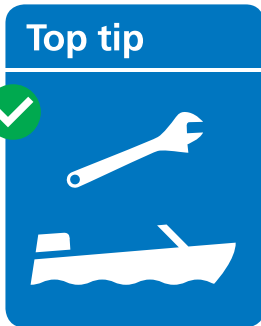
## Engine maintenance

- Don't let oil or debris build-up in the bilges.
- Inspect surfaces and items adjacent to exhausts for signs of heat damage or charring.
- Check exhaust systems of inboard engines for leaks.
- Check for loose fuel joints, damaged fuel tanks or deteriorating hoses.

## Fuel safety

- Take care when refuelling. Put out naked flames first. Turn off the engine and cooking before handling any fuel.
- Prevent petrol vapour from entering the boat by closing the doors, windows or hatches and closing the awning.
- Refuel outboard engines and generators well away from the boat.
- Leaks, spills and vapour can ignite easily. Clean them up straight away and make sure filler caps are secure after refuelling.
- Only carry spare petrol if necessary and store it in a self-draining locker or on open deck.
- Generators should be stored outside the cabin space when not in use.

## Top tip



**Maintain your boat's engine and fuel systems regularly**

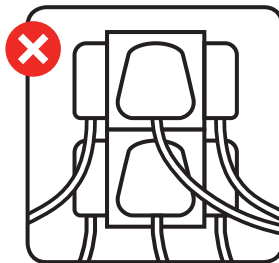
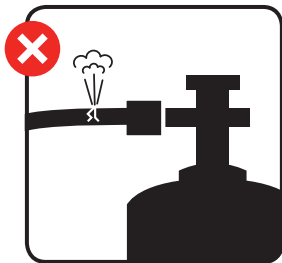
**Have appliances properly installed and serviced routinely by competent fitters.**

### Gas safety

- Never restrict airflow by blocking vents or air gaps.
- Make sure gas cylinders are secure after they've been changed. Test for leaks with detection fluid.
- Whenever possible, turn gas valves off before you go to bed or leave the boat.
- Replace gas hoses showing signs of cracking, bitterness or discolouration.
- Store gas cylinders outside, in a self-draining and fire resistant locker. Keep them upright and secured from moving.

### Electrics

- Check for the British or European safety mark when buying electrical goods.
- Don't overload adaptors. Keep to one plug per socket. Use the right fuse or circuit breaker to avoid overheating.
- Unplug appliances when they're not in use or when you leave the boat.
- Damaged wires can overheat rapidly, so look out for scorch marks or burning smells.
- Take extra care when reinstalling the boat's batteries. Check straps or restraints are secure afterwards.



## Plan a safe escape

**Make an emergency plan with everyone on board before you set out.**

- Make sure people know how to close emergency valves and switches in case of fire.
  - You are more at risk from a fire when asleep, so check your boat before you go to bed. Make sure cooking and heating appliances are off and candles and cigarettes are fully extinguished.
  - Keep a torch easily available to help you escape at night. Make sure you have spares and test them regularly.
  - Don't go to sea without a VHF radio. Have a charged-up, handheld, waterproof one ready for use at any time.
  - Don't rely on a mobile phone. There could be no signal and it may not be waterproof.
- Have enough life jackets for everyone on board, and keep them in good condition.
  - Keep exits clear and keys to hand. Don't lock or bolt doors and hatches from the outside.
  - Track your location so you can tell the emergency services where you are if needed.
  - Consider having a 'grab-bag' for removing vital possessions in an emergency.

**MAKE A  
MAYDAY  
CALL**  
**AND CHECK FOR  
LANDMARKS**





# What to do if there's a fire

**If in doubt, don't fight a fire yourself. Get out, stay out and call 999**

- Do not enter a smoke filled space.
- If you are already in a smoke filled space keep low down where the air is clearer.
- If you need to break glass to escape use a blanket to prevent injury.
- Starve the fire of air. Don't open engine hatches or doors unless you have to.

## Inland fires

- If you are inland or moored near to land move everybody off the boat and call 999 immediately.

## Fires at sea

- If you are off-shore move as far away from the fire as you can on deck. Get everybody into life jackets.
- Take a handheld VHF radio onto deck with you to call for help.
- Notify the Coastguard by radio, make a Mayday call and/or display a distress signal.



**Get out, stay out and call 999**



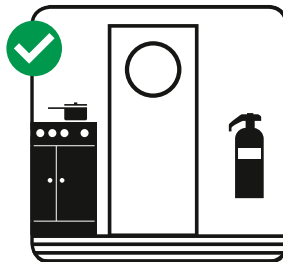
# Fire blankets and extinguishers

**To extinguish a small fire, or to help you escape safely, consider using an extinguisher.**

- Familiarise yourself with how to use any extinguishers on board.
- Only consider tackling a fire with an extinguisher if you are confident how to use it. If in doubt, evacuate the boat.
- Keep fire blankets and extinguishers within easy reach, close to exits and risk points, such as the galley and engine area.
- Check extinguishers on a regular basis for serious dents, leaks and loss of pressure.
- Check the pin and firing mechanism for any signs of problems or weaknesses.
- Check the dates on extinguishers and fire blankets and service or replace them as recommended by the instructions.
- Only choose extinguishers that carry recognised approval marks such as those shown below.



**Always read instructions**



## Further information

- For more information on boat fire safety and routine safety checks visit [www.boatsafetyscheme.org/fire](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/fire)
- For more information on carbon monoxide and CO alarms visit [www.boatsafetyscheme.org/co](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/co)
- For information on sea regulations and emergencies at sea visit the Maritime and Coastguard Agency at [www.gov.uk/mca](http://www.gov.uk/mca)
- For more information on electrical safety visit [www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe/electrical-safety](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe/electrical-safety)
- For advice, checks of emergency equipment and emergency rescue information contact Royal National Lifeboat Institute at [www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)
- For information about past incidents with lessons learnt, and for reporting accidents see Marine Accident Investigation Branch at [www.gov.uk/maib](http://www.gov.uk/maib)

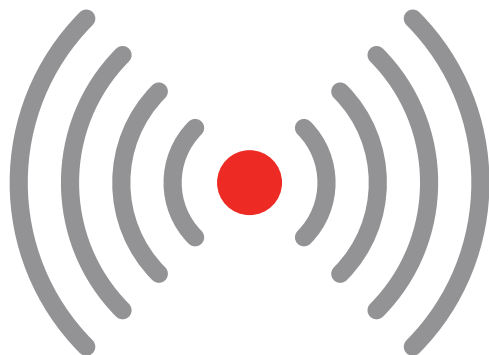
### Boating advice

- For boat builders and service engineers contact the British Marine Federation [www.britishmarine.co.uk](http://www.britishmarine.co.uk)
- For advice on navigation, boat handling and emergency training contact the Royal Yachting Association [www.rya.org.uk](http://www.rya.org.uk)

### General fire safety

- Contact your local fire and rescue service for free advice.
- For more information on fire safety visit [www.facebook.com/firekills](http://www.facebook.com/firekills)





**SMOKE ALARMS**  
**SAVE**  
**LIVES**

For more information on  
general fire safety visit  
[www.facebook.com/firekills](http://www.facebook.com/firekills)

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