

# FIRE SAFETY ON BOATS



**FIRE  
KILLS**

**YOU CAN  
PREVENT IT**

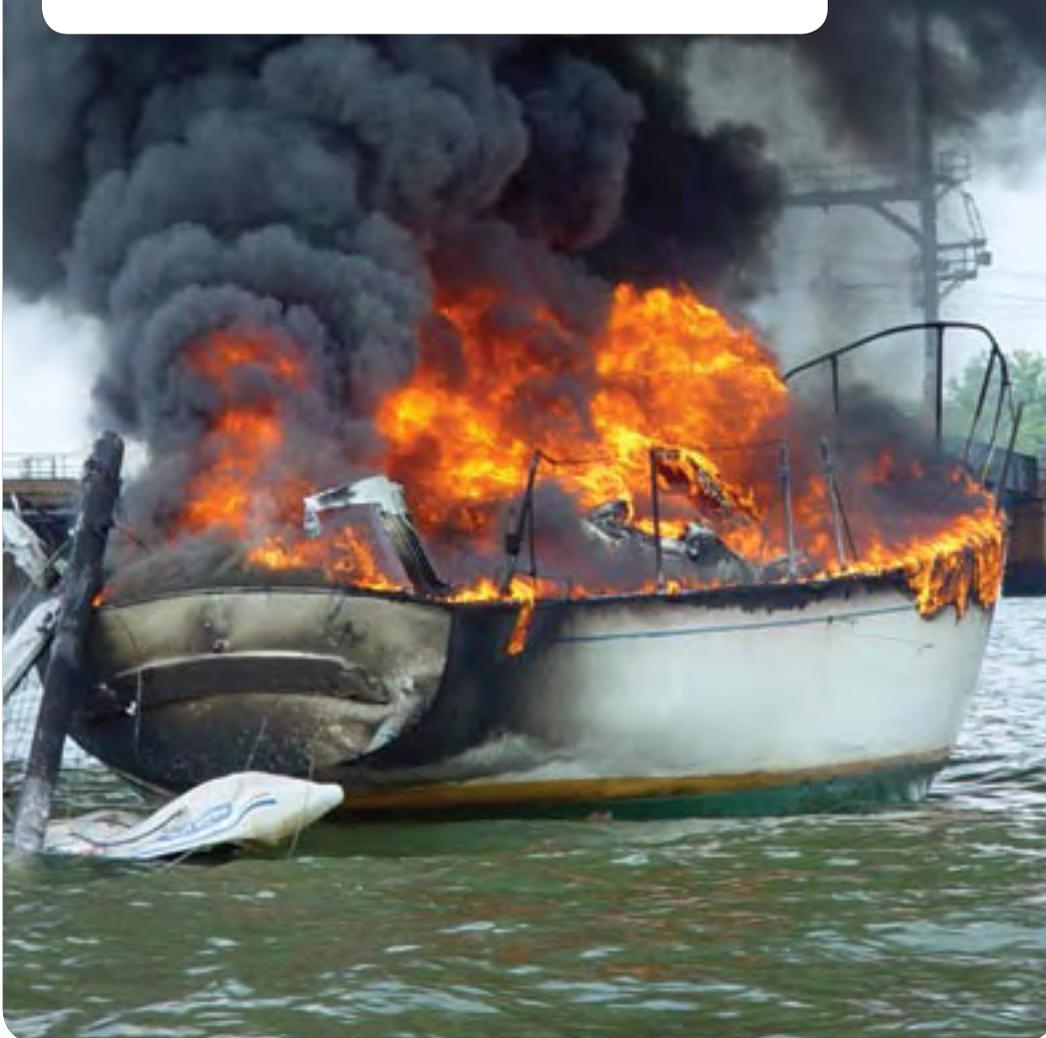
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## Did you know?

- On average, 89 fire-related accidents and injuries occur on boats every year.
- Fires on privately owned boats kill at least three people every year.

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 and detectors save lives

Fire can spread quickly on a boat, even on water. Alarms and detectors 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.com/fire](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.com/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. Never disconnect it or remove working batteries.

### Carbon monoxide (CO) and gas detectors

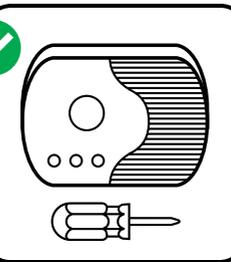
- Fit a CO detector to alert you any poisonous carbon monoxide.
- Check your detector is suitable for marine use and meets the BS7860 or EN50291 standards.
- Fit a bubble type leak detector in the gas locker.
- Push the detector button routinely to check for leaks in the gas system.
- Look out for these 'approved' symbols when buying alarms and detectors:



British Standard Kitemark



### Top tip



Fit alarms and detectors to stay safe

## Safe cooking and heating

**Turn cooking appliances off properly after use.**

- Never leave cooking unattended. Turn things off until you come back.
- Be extra careful when frying 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.
- A spark device (proprietary gas-lighter) is the safest way to light a stove without its own igniter.
- Standard barbecues shouldn't be used on boats.
- 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.
- Check the flues 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.
- Dispose of embers carefully. If they're still warm they could cause a fire or build-up of CO.
- Ensure all hobs have shut-off or isolation valves.



**Turn appliances off properly after use**

## Protecting the inside of your boat

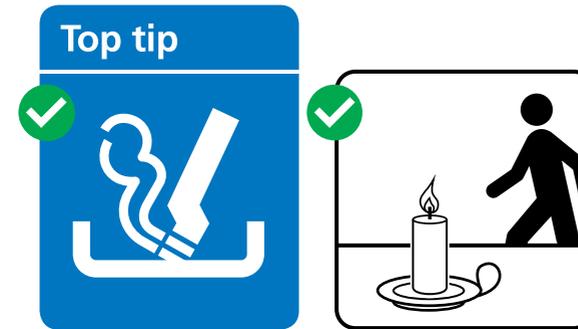
### Cigarettes

**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.
- Avoid smoking when you're sleepy to avoid an accident.
- 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.
- Heat from light bulbs can cause fires. Energy saving light bulbs do not get as hot and are therefore safer.
- 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.
- A snuffer is the safest way to put out a candle to avoid sparks flying.



**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 the lagging of engine and heater exhausts for damage and deterioration and nearby items for 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 on deck.



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

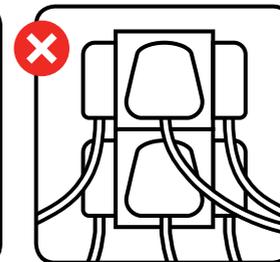
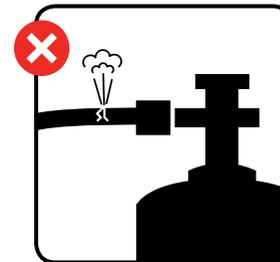


## Gas safety

- Ensure gas appliances are installed and maintained routinely by trained fitters.
- 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, brittleness or discolouration.
- Store gas cylinders outside, in a self-draining and fire resistant locker. Keep them upright and secured from moving.

## Electrics

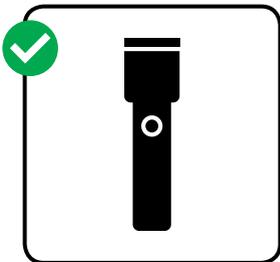
- Check for the British or European safety mark when buying electrical goods.
- Use a trained marine electrician to install and service electrics.
- Don't overload adaptors. Keep to one plug per socket. Use the right fuse or circuit breaker to avoid overheating.
- Unplug appliances when they're not in 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.



## Have an emergency plan

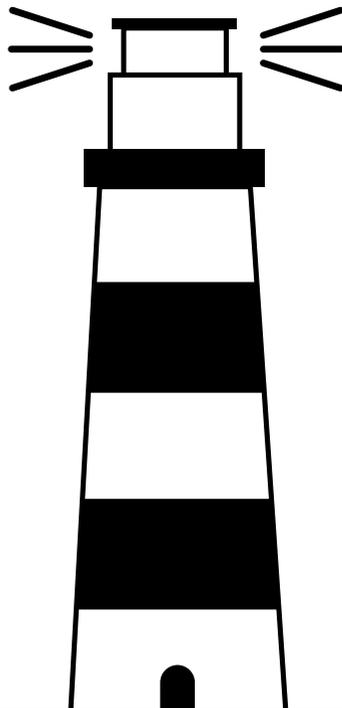
**Make an emergency plan with everyone on board before you set out.**

- Make sure people know how to close emergency valves and switches in case of fire.
- 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.

**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 wait for the fire service.**

- 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.

### Top tip

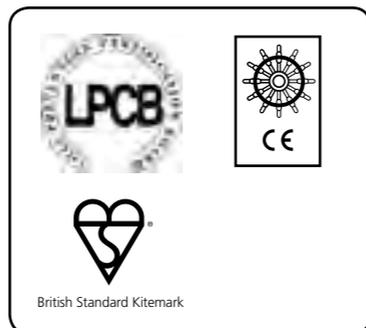


**Get out, stay out  
and wait for the  
fire service**

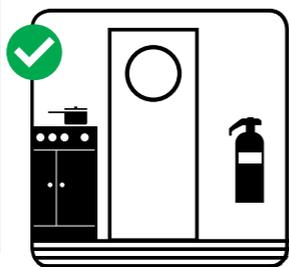
## Fire blankets and extinguishers

**Familiarise yourself with how to use any extinguishers on board. Always read instructions before use.**

- Only tackle 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 these:



**Always read instructions**



## Further information

- For more information on boat fire safety and routine safety checks visit [www.boatsafety.com](http://www.boatsafety.com)
- For more information on carbon monoxide detectors visit [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
- For information on sea regulations and emergencies at sea visit the Maritime and Coastguard Agency at [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)
- 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.maib.gov.uk](http://www.maib.gov.uk)

### 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 & Rescue Service for free advice. You will find their number in the local phone book.
- For more information on fire safety visit [www.direct.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.direct.gov.uk/firekills)



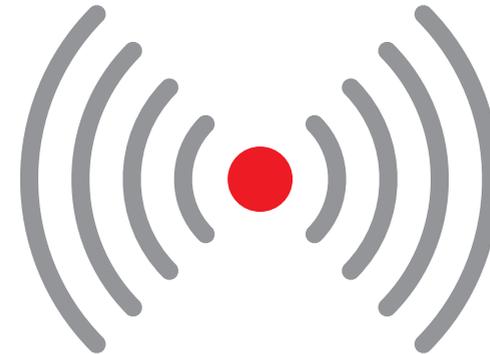
### Don't forget

Keep this handy reminder of our top tips.

- Fit smoke alarms, carbon monoxide and gas detectors.
- Turn fuel off properly after use.
- Dispose of cigarettes carefully. Put them out, right out.
- Make sure appliances are installed and maintained by a trained fitter.
- Clean up fuel spillages straight away.
- Plan your emergency procedure and make sure everyone on board knows it.
- Avoid fighting a fire yourself. Get out, stay out and wait for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- If you are moored near land move everybody off the boat and call 999 immediately.
- If you are off-shore move as far away from the fire as you can on deck. Get everybody into life jackets and make a mayday call.
- Keep fire blankets and extinguishers close to exits and risk points, such as the galley and engine area. Only use them if you know how to.

# FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Remember these top tips to help you stay safe on board your boat.



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

For more information on  
general fire safety visit  
[www.direct.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.direct.gov.uk/firekills)

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