

Boat Safety Scheme
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Act now, as carbon monoxide alarms became mandatory in April

From 1 April at least one carbon monoxide (CO) alarm became a requirement on nearly all private and non-private boats in scope of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) Requirements. BSS Certifications will not be issued to boats without alarms.

The new BSS Requirements apply to boats with accommodation spaces i.e. areas within a boat surrounded by permanent boat structure and where carbon monoxide gas may accumulate.

Although the need for CO alarms is being introduced to help protect boat owners from sources of the toxic gas from neighbouring boats, the alarms are also expected to prevent death or injury to crew members from their own boat engines or appliances.

There are four new BSS Check items in the BSS examination:

Check 6.4.1 covers the provision of alarms in suitable numbers – this check ensures everyone on board can hear the alarm if it activates.

Check 6.4.2 is an Advice check for private boats, promoting a CO alarm in the same space as a solid fuel stove – stoves can present a specific risk if flue gases enter the cabin.

Check 6.4.3 requires CO alarms to be placed in open view, be of a certified quality and have a test function button – this check provides an assurance about the quality of alarm manufacture and performance.

Check 6.4.4 requires CO alarms to be in good and working condition, showing no signs of damage, being within any visible expiry dates and passing the function test using the test button – this check ensures the alarm will work effectively if called upon.

The BSS has just published a new handout as an essential guide to all the new requirements and background information. It covers what is required and how the checks will be carried out by BSS Examiners and how the alarms will help keep crew members safe, including:

- CO alarm makers guidance about where to place a CO alarm to achieve best protection,
- What type of CO alarm to buy,
- What to do if a CO alarm goes off,
- What to do if carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected.

The BSS has published the essential guide handout on its website and copies will be distributed by BSS Examiners. It is also available for marinas and boat clubs to distribute. It can also be viewed or downloaded from www.boatsafetyscheme.org

The new requirements came into effect on 1 April. Don't wait until your boat's next BSS examination to get a CO alarm. Read the handout now and protect yourself and your family from carbon monoxide poisoning today.

- ENDS -

The **Boat Safety Scheme**, or BSS, is a public safety initiative owned by the Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency. Its purpose is to help minimise the risk of boat fires, explosions, or pollution from boats harming visitors to the inland waterways, the waterways' workforce and any other people on or near the waterway. Journalists seeking further information about the BSS should contact communications manager, Rob McLean at robert.m@boatsafetyscheme.org or Rob Lyon Playfair Marketing at rob@playfairmarketing.com

Carbon Monoxide (CO) information: CO is a highly toxic poison that cannot be heard, seen, felt, tasted or smelt – it's sometimes called the silent killer for good reason. It is the result of an incomplete or inefficient burn of any carbon-based fuel including wood, charcoal, coal, petrol, diesel, propane and butane. It can happen on a boat with one or a mix of these factors:

- Faulty, badly maintained or misused appliances;
- Exhaust fumes from a boat's engine or generator;
- Escaped flue gases from solid fuel stoves;
- Blocked ventilation or short supply of air (fuel needs oxygen to burn safely).

In recent years, solid fuel stoves and engine or generator exhaust gases have been responsible for most CO poisoning deaths of boaters.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are not always obvious and are often mistaken for flu-like illnesses. For example, one of the most common symptoms of mild carbon monoxide poisoning is a tension-type headache as well as dizziness, nausea, tiredness and stomach pain.

Symptoms may be less severe or disappear when you're away from the boat. If this is your experience, you may have been affected by carbon monoxide poisoning and should seek medical opinion.

If you think you are suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning, contact your doctor or if the symptoms are severe get to A&E and let them know you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

If CO poisoning is confirmed, you should ask a qualified professional to check the appliances before using them again.