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Take the lessons from the death from carbon monoxide poisoning of two friends in York

Following the deaths of two friends from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in a boat called Diversion in York in December 2019, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has published a safety flyer with the lessons learnt from its initial findings and the Boat Safety Scheme is urging boaters to read it and adopt the safety advice immediately.

The boaters died when the improvised and mismatched cabin heater installation leaked exhaust gas resulting in lethal amounts of toxic CO being pumped into the cabin near the steering position. The leaking gas and the fact that there was no working CO alarm aboard, may have led to the poisoning of the men's blood systems without them having any warning.

The BSS joins with the MAIB in asking boaters to install appropriate appliances safely and ensure they are maintained correctly and have at least one suitable working CO alarm aboard.

The Bulletin stresses that work on any exhaust system should only be installed according to instructions with approved parts, suitable for marine use. The BSS urges boat owners to have a suitably qualified fitter carry out the installation and checking work.

Both organisations strongly recommend that any fuel burning systems should also be checked routinely by competent engineers, at least annually and any faults found, addressed without delay.

The MAIB also advises boaters to install a CO alarm, preferably meeting safety standard EN 50291-2:2010 (a marine use standard) following the instructions for installing it in a boat.

Boats with permanent accommodation space on the UK's waterways covered by the **Boat Safety Scheme requirements must have at least one suitable CO alarm installed** – more details are available on the BSS website.

'Carbon monoxide is a silent killer and staying alive can mean recognising any early signs of poisoning and knowing what to do if CO poisoning is suspected.' said, BSS manager Kevin Tyson.

'It's critical that boaters fully take on board the potential dangers of carbon monoxide. It cannot be seen, smelt, tasted, or felt and in high concentrations, CO can kill without warning, sometimes in only minutes.'

'Even breathing-in lower levels of CO over a longer period, can have serious effects such as memory problems and difficulty concentrating.' He added

The early symptoms of CO poisoning can be masked or mistaken for colds, flu or COVID-19. Victims might suffer headaches, suffer mood changes; feel sick and dizzy; or be tired and confused, some may have stomach pains and start vomiting.

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More serious affects can quickly develop such as loss of balance, difficulty breathing or controlling limbs and eventually unconsciousness.

Any carbon-fuel burning appliance or engine can cause CO – carbon fuels include diesel, petrol, gas, coal, wood and charcoal.

The BSS has the latest advice for boaters on [http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe/carbon-monoxide-\(co\)](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe/carbon-monoxide-(co)) – **Don't let CO ruin your life!**

- ENDS –

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) examines and investigates all types of marine accidents to or on board UK ships worldwide, and other ships in UK territorial waters.

The role of the MAIB is to contribute to boating safety by determining the causes and circumstances of marine accidents and working with others to reduce the likelihood of such accidents recurring in the future. Accident investigations are conducted solely in the interest of future safety. The Branch does not apportion blame and it does not establish liability, enforce laws or carry out prosecutions.

MAIB Safety Bulletins are produced when urgent safety issues emerge during the course of an investigation and the Chief Inspector of the MAIB decides to disseminate this important information in advance of the main investigation report being produced.

The Safety Bulletin concerning the fatal CO incident on mv Diversion is to be published on the MAIB website here - <https://www.gov.uk/search/news-and-communications?organisations%5B%5D=marine-accident-investigation-branch&parent=marine-accident-investigation-branch> and will allow an incident-specific link.

The BSS is a public safety project owned jointly by the Canal & River Trust, registered as a charity with the charity number 1146792, and the Environment Agency. At least 14 other navigation and harbour authorities have also adopted it. The navigation authorities' purposes for the Scheme are to help reduce the risks of fire, explosion and pollution on small craft. This is done by promoting fire safety and pollution avoidance advice to help boat owners keep themselves and their crews' safe as well as regular examination of fuel systems, gas systems, electrical systems and appliances. The BSS is responsible for the administration and supervision of the BSS examination scheme.

The need for a BSS examination: Boats that are older than four years and licensed or registered on most of the UK's inland waterways must go through a BSS examination once every four years and be certified as compliant with the BSS requirements. The BSS examination makes sure that a boat meets the navigation or harbour authority's minimum safety and environmental standards.

BSS certification has a life span of four years. Navigation authorities using the Scheme usually require BSS certification at the time of licensing, registration, toll renewal or similar. The certification is achieved when a boat is found to be compliant with all the BSS requirements relevant for that boat. These can be freely downloaded or read on www.boatsafetyscheme.org. The compliance check is carried out by authorized and independent practitioners known as BSS Examiners.

From the 1st April 2019 a carbon monoxide alarm is required on all boats in scope of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) requirements that have permanent accommodation spaces. BSS Certifications will not be issued to boats without suitable alarms. More details can be found on this web page <https://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/media/296735/BSS-COAR-Handout-21Mar2019-reduced-size.pdf>

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