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PORTABLE GAS EQUIPMENT SAFETY WARNING

Boat owners are being urged to avoid using portable gas camping stoves, lamps and heaters on board boats because of the risks of explosions, fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.

The alert for this summer follows yet another gas stove explosion, this time in the close confines of a tent on a North Wales campsite. The two young people inside were taken to hospital with facial burns, very similar to when two boaters were severely injured in an explosion on a boat on the Norfolk Broads in 2010

Such equipment is designed for use in open air and is not suitable for use in the limited space of a boat cabin where both explosions and carbon monoxide would have disastrous consequences.



The stove that hospitalised two Norfolk Broads boaters

The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) says boaters need to treat all such portable gas equipment with huge respect and only use such equipment when ashore in open air

BSS manager, Graham Watts explains, 'When the liquefied fuel in the canister escapes it re-forms as a gas and its volume expands 250 times, so even portable gas equipment can cause a powerful explosion, easily big enough to send people to hospital.

'The inherent risks with escaping gas, fire breaking out, or carbon monoxide in the poorly ventilated, tight confines of a boat is greatly magnified compared to the open air on land.

He advised boaters to think about the alternatives; 'for example, if all you want is a hot drink aboard a day boat, a flask is probably the simplest and safest way.

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'If you want light, the latest battery powered or wind-up LED lights will last for ages and are far easier to use than gas lanterns.

'Where a simple cooker is needed aboard, think about installing a marine spirit stove as an alternative to a portable gas stove.'

Any boater deciding to use portable gas appliances need to be completely familiar with the correct and safe way of operation - from taking out of its storage case to fitting new fuel canisters.

These are the key safety points that can help to keep boat crews safe:

- Only use portable appliances onshore.
- *Stow any canisters, used or unused and any appliance if it has a canister inserted, in a *self-draining* gas locker, or on open deck where any escaping gas can flow overboard.
- Be familiar with the operating instructions before use.
- Before you start, check the appliance's condition, if the gas canister seal looks damaged, or if the appliances or gas canister is extremely rusty and deteriorated, do not use it.
- To avoid gas leaks and carbon monoxide poisoning check that all equipment has been correctly assembled before turning it on.
- Never attempt to fit a new canister to an appliance when aboard, wait until you are onshore.
- Before fitting a canister, put out all open flames and smoking materials.
- Ensure that you have the correct type of gas canister for your appliance and that it is being inserted in the right place and in the right way.
- If you smell or hear gas leaking before attempting to light an appliance, don't use it.
- If any gas is leaking, ensure that it is being dispersed in free air well away from the boat or any sparks or other sources of ignition.

*Inland waterway regulations do not ban portable gas equipment on boats, but when not in operation, any appliance with a canister fitted and all spare gas canisters, empty or full, must be stowed in lockers that are self-draining, or on open deck areas where any leaking gas will flow overboard. The risk of causing a pool of explosive vapour inside the boat must be avoided.

– ENDS –

Notes:

For more fire &CO safety information go to: www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe

The BSS is a public safety project owned jointly by the Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency. At least 12 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.

www.boatsafetyscheme.org