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Overview of proposals, comments and responses on the proposed changes to Boat Safety Scheme requirements for hire boats

This overview has been split into three sections for ease of reading. It contains the main points arising from the consultation including the BSS reaction.

The full consultation, all comments made and the detailed BSS responses can be seen on this link www.boatsafetyScheme.org/about-us/hirer-safety-review/hire-boat-requirements-consultation/

Regarding the implementation, in taking account of the weight and extent of the comments received, it has been decided to implement the revised BSS hire boat requirements from April 2017, twelve months later than proposed in the consultation.

Firstly the introduction of six new BSS hire boat requirements;

This section includes items such as new requirements for suitable smoke alarms on sleep-aboard hire boats and carbon monoxide alarms on hire boats with solid fuel stoves; as well as labels identifying secondary means of escape where the exits are not self-evident.

These proposals were generally well supported and will be implemented as published. The BSS reiterated its assurance that the BSS requirements for secondary means of escape will not apply to boats where it would mean cutting through structural members to achieve this.

The additional new proposals consulted on were for warning signs or deck markings of the area where there is the risk of being knocked overboard by an uncontrolled swing of the tiller arm on narrowboat style craft. Yachts are excluded from this requirement. The alternative compliance option of a warning sign in sight of the helm position appears to be overlooked in many of the consultation responses. So the BSS will make the two options clear.

It also included a requirement for a Crew Area and Access Limitation Label in view of all main helm positions on all hire boats and; that any crew areas should have slip-resistant surfaces, which should also be maintained in good condition.

The planned 'Crew Area and Limitation Label' is subject to the forthcoming consultation on the revised Hire Boat Code. The intended BSS check will only verify that a sign is in place and that it remains legible.

'Crew areas' will need to be identified by hire operators for each boat, in support of their testing of stability/freeboard requirements. Crew areas are intended to limit the total numbers of persons on the hire boat and limit where hirers can go on the boat or may limit the numbers on the cabin roof perhaps or on side decks.

The hire operator in setting the extent of the permissible 'crew area' will determine the areas where slip-resistant surfaces need to be applied and where handrail requirements apply.

Concerns were also raised regarding the extent of the slip-resistant surface and the need for an objective assessment of the provision and the surface treatment condition. The area of the slip-resistant surface will be determined by the hire operator, detailed information on the checking procedures will be published as soon as possible. The BSS remains confident that any finalised check will allow for both, consistent application at BSS examination and for operators to easily self-assess their boats for compliance.

The principle underpinning the introduction of signage is the shared responsibility of hirers taking on board and adhering to the guidance at handover as well as any signs augmenting that handover. This means that hirers must also accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

All comments received on Question 9 regarding crew area labels will be passed on to the AINA-led group developing the Hire Boat Code ready for its forthcoming consultation.

Secondly, the adoption of the BSS private boats requirements for a modern, risk-based approach.

This is where greater emphasis on condition checks and the allowance of extra compliance options replace the more rigid and detailed technical requirements in the 2002 BSS standards.

The current Part 10 hire boat annex will be replaced to contain both the old requirements retained from 2002 Part 10 and include some of those new hire boat requirements mentioned above.

The formal adoption of the 2013 BSS Requirements for hire boats will also include the 23 BSS private boat requirements introduced or amended since 2002, which includes these points:-

- any disused fuel filling points must be disabled.
- fuel tank vent hose connections must be accessible for inspection.
- high-pressure diesel fuel lines between injection pumps and injectors must be constructed of metallic pipe and not to be made of hose material
- structures and surfaces surrounding exhaust system components must be free of signs of heat damage.
- a check concerning the type, location and condition of 230V a.c. inlet connections.
- a check for the type of 230V a.c. power source lead connections.
- a check of the condition of 230V a.c. power source leads and connectors.
- addressing the fire/electrocution risk associated with using un-synchronised 230V a.c. supplies simultaneously, a check that male pins on power source inlet connections are not 'live' when an alternative power source is connected to the 230V a.c. system.
- a check for the presence of a consumer unit on 230V a.c. systems.
- portable fire extinguishers to be in open view, or their location clearly marked.
- the check of gas locker condition has changed from an assessment of gas-tightness to a check for any path for leaked LPG to enter the interior of the vessel.

Finally, five clarifications or improvements of some existing BSS hire boat standards are to be adopted:

- The requirements for weed hatches should now apply to bow thruster hatches that can be opened by hirers;
- The requirement for a means of reversing, will include outboard motors,
- The handrail/guardrail requirement will be aligned with ISO 15085 and include 'handholds' at designated crew areas;
- The required lifebuoy(s) should be in good condition;
- The required fire blanket should be permanently fixed in open view

In summary

It is expected the revised hire boat requirements will be published April 2016 and that most of the changes will take effect on 1 April 2017 by which time, BSS examiners will have completed familiarisation training exercises.

The balance of suggested changes, notably those for designated crew areas will be introduced only if and when navigation authorities adopt the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) / British Marine (BM) / Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) *Hire Boat Code* which is itself to be subject of a separate consultation by the Code's owners later this year.

The BSS and navigation authorities are encouraging hire craft operators, people who hire boats and members of the marine trade to adopt the changes as soon as possible to help address the identified associated risks.

The final versions of the new BSS requirements and their supporting checking procedures will be posted on the BSS website later this year as pdf files and will be available to be saved to computers or printed out.