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### **Wise up to Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning**

Wise up to the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is the plea from the Boat Safety Scheme as it reveals that in the past 20 years, over two-dozen boaters have died from exposure to the toxic fumes. Over a third of the fatal incidents are linked to problems with solid fuel stoves; slightly less than one third involve exhaust gases from outboard or portable engines such as generators. Other causes include gas appliances, oil-fired heating and leaking exhausts from installed engines.

To help boaters deal with the risks, the BSS and CoGDDEM, (the Council of Gas Detection and Environmental Monitoring), have produced new and updated advice called 'Carbon Monoxide Safety On Boats' which is available as a booklet or to download from the BSS website.

Commenting on these figures, Graham Watts, BSS Manager said,

We are concerned that still too many boaters do not yet know enough about what causes CO poisoning or how to best protect their crew and families from the deadly toxin.

The information is aimed at helping owners to better recognise the signs of CO poisoning and know what to do if they are suffering.

Boaters can easily spot potential CO hazards on their own craft as 'Carbon Monoxide Safety on Boats' gives some basic, simple, watch-points that will show immediately if urgent action is needed to stay safe.

Supporting the new publication, Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group said ;

'we will only see a reduction in the 50 fatalities in the UK every year when more people, including boat users, understand the symptoms and dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

'Our group urges boaters to act on the new advice from the BSS and CoGDDEM and to use carbon monoxide alarms on their craft.'

The BSS recommends fitting a suitable audible CO alarm for added assurance on all boats with engines and fuel burning appliances. Alarms approved as meeting BS EN 50291 are best suited for boats and the leaflet provides detailed advice on where alarms should be fitted.

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BSS Manager, Graham Watts said, 'a carbon monoxide alarm could be an ideal gift for a boat owner – a real life saver.'

The BSS/CoGDEM 'Carbon Monoxide Safety on Boats' information can be downloaded from the BSS website [www.boatsafetyScheme.org/stay-safe/carbon-monoxide-\(co\)](http://www.boatsafetyScheme.org/stay-safe/carbon-monoxide-(co)). Printed leaflets may also be available from boat clubs or marina offices'

### **-ENDS -**

**The BSS/CoGDEM 'Carbon Monoxide Safety on Boats'** information provides well researched advice in one place to help boaters to keep themselves safe. It offers:

- a thorough description of the nature of the carbon monoxide risk relevant to boats;
- plain, understandable information on the medical effects and the signs of CO poisoning as agreed with the Health Protection Agency;
- clear instructions as to how to act quickly if CO poisoning is suspected;
- informs as to how to recognise the warning signs on boats and how to prevent CO;
- a straightforward list of things never to do as a boat owner;
- advice on CO alarms, why they save lives, what type to use, where to fit them and how to ensure they continue to work effectively;
- further links to more detailed information such as CO health advice and tips on reducing the risks from solid fuel stoves and portable generators.

**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 Scheme also has a monitoring role concerning sinking and man-overboard events in order that any associated causes linked to boat construction or equipment can be identified. It reports the incident data to its advising and managing committees.

**The BSS examination and certificate** BSS certificates have a life span of four years. Navigation authorities using the Scheme usually require a valid BSS certificate at the time of licensing, registration, toll renewal or similar. The certificate is issued to boat that is found to be compliant with all the BSS requirements relevant for that boat. These can be found in the BSS Essential Guide which can be freely downloaded or read on [www.boatsafetyScheme.org](http://www.boatsafetyScheme.org). The compliance check is carried out by an authorized, independent practitioner known as a BSS examiner.

**CoGDEM** is recognised as the single representative voice serving the U.K.'s gas detection, analysis and monitoring Industries. It aims to influence educational and training programmes relating to gas detection and analysis.

CoGDEM helped create Europe's first standard for CO alarms (BS 7860, published in 1996) and since then, it has contributed to the development of the European standard BS EN50291.

It is pushing for their mandatory installation in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and local authority housing organisations. CoGDEM works to foster consumer confidence in CO detector performance and reliability.

CoGDEM supports the work of the UK's CO awareness and victim support charities and that of the Boat Safety Scheme in seeking to see the reduction of carbon monoxide risks on boats.