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BSS points boaters to important safety issues highlighted by Windermere's Easter tragedy

On the eve of Boat Fire Safety Week, the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is pointing UK boaters to the safety issues identified today in the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) Safety Bulletin concerning the death of mother and her 10-year old daughter aboard the motor cruiser Arniston on Lake Windermere at Easter.

Indications are that the deaths were caused by poisoning from carbon monoxide (CO) gas.

The initial findings of the MAIB are that exhaust fumes spread from the engine bay into the cabin when an improvised exhaust and silencer became detached from a 'suitcase' style portable petrol-engined generator.

The [important safety information in the Safety Bulletin](#) is that portable generators are usually intended for use in the open air and that the use or permanent installation of these engines on boats, particularly in enclosed spaces or below decks, increases the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Bulletin stresses that work on any boat engine exhaust system should only be carried out by suitably qualified technicians following manufacturers' instructions with approved parts suitable for marine use.

Supporting these messages in the MAIB Safety Bulletin, BSS manager Graham Watts said: 'It's critical that boaters wise-up to 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.'

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

The early symptoms of CO poisoning can be masked or mistaken for colds or flu. Victims might suffer headaches, become bad tempered; feel sick and dizzy; they might be tired and confused or have stomach pains and start throwing-up.

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.

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Graham Watts added

'In the BSS experience, the main sources of CO on a boat are engine exhaust fumes and escaped combustion gases from solid fuel stoves and flues. Other domestic appliances like gas fridges and paraffin heaters that are faulty, badly maintained, or misused can also produce the toxic gas.'

He said:

'CO can also occur or be made worse when ventilators are blocked, or fresh air is in short supply - fuels need the right amount of oxygen to burn safely.'

'Prevention is the key to staying safe, equipment needs to be properly installed, well maintained and used according to the instructions'

'Our belt and braces advice is to fit a CO alarm approved as meeting BS EN 50291; these are best suited for boats.'

CO alarms and/or their batteries should be replaced if they do not work when tested, or if the replacement date marked on the alarm has passed.

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 Arniston is to be published on the MAIB website here - http://www.maib.gov.uk/publications/safety_bulletins.cfm and will allow an incident-specific link.

Boat Fire Safety Week is a joint Fire Kills and BSS initiative that sees fire and rescue services offering fire and carbon monoxide safety advice to boaters throughout the country. In 2013 it runs from 25-31 May and is being supported this year by the Royal National Lifeboats Institution, the Royal Yachting Association and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

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, independent practitioners known as BSS examiners.