

[Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week 2020](#)

Carbon monoxide awareness week

Today is the start of carbon monoxide awareness week 2020. MAIB recently published a safety bulletin about the tragic deaths of two sailors on board [Diversion](#) due to carbon monoxide poisoning. As we continue our investigation it is vital that we remain alert to the silent danger carbon monoxide poses to the maritime community and the steps we can take to protect ourselves.

Over the past ten years MAIB has investigated six incidents involving carbon monoxide poisoning resulting in the tragic loss of ten lives. The majority of these incidents occurred on board motor cruisers used for recreation. In this time safety action has been taken and MAIB has made 12 safety recommendations focussed on preventing further, needless loss of life.

As well as the need to improve awareness of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and the groups most at risk, the investigations we have carried out reveal three common safety lessons that are worth highlighting.

Fit a carbon monoxide alarm and ensure it works

Due to the odourless, colourless nature of carbon monoxide, fitting a detector remains the only effective warning that the poisonous gas may be present. In all of the cases we investigated, the boats' occupants were not alerted to the presence of carbon monoxide either because there was no carbon monoxide alarm, or because the one fitted was not working. Our investigation into the fatal accident on board [Love for Lydia](#) highlights the importance of fitting a carbon monoxide alarm.

Install and maintain onboard equipment properly

The tragic incident which occurred on board [Arniston](#) raises the importance of ensuring equipment or modifications to boats are undertaken in accordance with the manufacturers guidelines. All safety critical work on boats should be undertaken by a competent marine engineer using the correct materials and all installations and modifications should be fit for purpose. Even a gas cooker, if not burning efficiently, can generate enough carbon monoxide to kill. [Eshcol](#) was a small commercial fishing vessel, and two crew lost their lives on board when they left the gas grill on overnight to warm the cabin.

Service engines regularly

Our investigation into carbon monoxide poisoning on motor cruiser [Vasquez](#) highlighted the importance of regularly servicing a boat's engine to ensure it remains reliable and safe to use. The investigation found that the engine on board Vasquez had not been regularly serviced and there was evidence that the exhaust system of the engine had been modified during the boat's life.

Ultimately, the only way that boat owners can take potentially lifesaving

action when exposed to carbon monoxide is by being alerted to the presence of this poisonous gas. Carbon monoxide alarms are readily available, inexpensive and simple to fit. I urge boat owners to fit one as soon as possible.

[Read more about CO safety on the Boat Safety Scheme website](#)