

Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week 2022

News story

Statement from our Chief Inspector, Captain Andrew Moll OBE, at the start of this year's Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week.



Captain Andrew Moll OBE shares some safety critical advice with boat users to mark the start of carbon monoxide awareness week 2022, reminding them of the hazards posed by this poisonous gas.

Many of us take steps in our homes to stay safe from carbon monoxide by installing CO alarms and having an annual boiler service, but are the same precautions being taken when out on the water?

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has investigated six incidents in the past 12 years with the needless loss of 10 lives due to carbon monoxide poisoning. All of these happened on board recreational motor cruisers or small fishing vessels.

Today, to mark the start of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week (21 to 27 November), the MAIB is reminding boat users of the three simple steps that they can take to stay safe from this silent killer.

Servicing – install and maintain on board equipment properly

Engines and equipment used on board, such as cookers, grills and cabin heaters, can give off carbon monoxide if not properly maintained. Regular servicing should be undertaken by someone competent to carry out the task, for example a marine engineer or a qualified heating installer. All installations and modifications to equipment should be fit for purpose and carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

The MAIB investigation into the tragic incident on board [Arniston](#)

highlights the importance of ensuring equipment or modifications to boats are conducted in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

Similarly, the investigation into carbon monoxide poisoning on the motor cruiser [Vasquez](#) found that the engine had not been regularly serviced and that the exhaust system had been modified during the boat's life.

Ventilation – ensure there is adequate ventilation in the cabin

With winter upon us and fuel prices still high, boat users may be tempted to keep doors and windows closed to stay warm and reduce drafts. However, carbon monoxide can build up when engines idle in enclosed areas, such as against quay walls, next to other boats or inside locks. Adequate ventilation is an important way of protecting against the potential accumulation of poisonous fumes in cabins.

CO alarms – fit a marine approved carbon monoxide alarm and test it frequently

Carbon monoxide alarms are readily available, inexpensive and easy to install. This potentially lifesaving equipment will alert the boat user to the presence of this odourless, colourless poisonous gas so that action can be taken.

Our investigations into the fatal accidents on board [Love for Lydia](#) and [Diversion](#) both emphasise the importance of fitting a carbon monoxide alarm.

The [Boat Safety Scheme](#) has more information about the best place to install a detector and what to do if the alarm sounds.

Closing thoughts

At this time of year, as weather begins to get cooler, there is a temptation for those on the water to keep doors, hatches and windows closed to reduce drafts, use cookers and grills more to prepare hot food, and turn on cabin heaters. Understanding the potential risks of carbon monoxide and taking these three important steps – servicing equipment, fitting a CO alarm and ventilating the cabin – will help protect against this odourless, colourless poisonous gas.

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