

Inland Waterways News

British Boat Safety Scheme

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British Waterways (which runs many canals) and the Environment Agency (which runs many rivers) have revamped their Boat Safety Scheme checklist: private craft have until 30 June 2002 to meet the majority of list items and 2006 to comply fully. Like the Irish National Car Test, the checklist has both mandatory items and advisory items. Here is a summary of the checklist.

Inboard engines

This section covers diesel, petrol and LPG butane/propane engines. Filler pipe material must be suitable for the fuel used and of non-kinking material; connections to tank and filler screw cap must be leak-proof. The deck filler must be clearly marked, vent pipes fitted properly and fuel tanks. Petrol power craft to have earth bonding tank. Flexible tubing is to be reinforced and of fire-resisting quality. Fuel pipe must be installed above the bilge water level and a suitable engine tray must be fitted. A dipstick or fuel gauge is required but not a sight gauge of glass or plastic, which could be damaged, allowing fuel to leak into the bilge.

Electrical installation

The battery box must be secure, and ventilated with an insulated cover made of non-corrosive material. Electric cables and circuits must be protected with appropriate fuse/circuit breakers and cables, not run in bilges. The master switch must be accessible and marked. Main leads must be soldered or pressure crimped. Generating systems and spark ignition must be effectively suppressed against radio/TV interference.

Portable engines (outboards and generators)

The fuel supply from portable or close-coupled fuel tanks must be capable of being readily shut off. No unauthorised modification of tank may be carried out. Fuel must be carried in appropriate containers.

Fire prevention

Fire extinguishers and blankets must be of approved types, accessible and adjacent to fire risk points. Portable and fixed fire extinguisher systems must be capable of being operated from a safe position. Furnishing fabrics and foam material must be manufactured from fire resistant and non-toxic material. It is the responsibility of boat owners to ensure adequate means of escape and to inform all guests of the arrangements.

LPG installation

Gas cylinders must be stored in an upright position in a locker with a means of draining gas from the lowest point. All pipe work must be of copper, stainless steel or copper nickel alloy. Flexible hose must conform to Type 2 of BS3212 and not exceed 1 meter in length. The system installation must comply with BS5482-3, with all of the system fully accessible for inspections and tests.

LPG refrigerators

Subject to consultation, the authorities are giving 4 years exemption to allow the continued use of existing non-room-sealed LPG fridges. The process is based on known risks arising from a build-up of noxious gases from non-room-sealed LPG fridges with prolonged use. The authorities noted evidence showing that poorly maintained gas fridges have caused fatalities in boat cabins and also note that LPG room-sealed appliances are now becoming available.



Overall

The checklist is a very well compiled list of safety items for a boat; it would be in the interest of boat owners to obtain the official list www.boatsafetyscheme.com and carry out an inspection of their own boat. A lot of boat owners would discover that their boats require modification to comply with the safety list.

When you have completed the checklist, ask yourself: should we have a national boat test?

