

# Boating Fire Safety

**A Fire Safety Message from the  
New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control**

## *A guide for preventing fires in boats.*

Whether moored or in open waters, fire safety while boating is essential. You can't simply step away from a fire if you're commissioned in open waters. It is essential that every member of your party know what to do in an emergency or fire.

**1 Preparation** - Before heading to the open water plan, planning can help keep the day enjoyable.

- **Education** –Take safety courses, including first aid, fire extinguisher use and safe boating and navigation. This will make boating not only fun, but safer for you, your family, your passengers and other boaters that you encounter. Invite family members and guests to attend with you. Always be sure someone on your vessel can operate the boat and the radio in case you are incapacitated.
- **Planning** – Plan and record your trip, tell family and friends of your plans. Check and double check the weather forecast.

**2 Prevention** - The best fire protection is to prevent a fire from ever starting.

- **Maintenance** is paramount in keeping a boat fire safe. Keep you boat's engine in good repair. Trouble spots in an engine compartment are leaks in fuel lines and end fittings, frayed wiring and rigged electrical systems. Keep the bilge clean and dry. If you smell fumes at any time other than when you are fueling, find out why right away. Fix electrical problems promptly and professionally.
- **Heat** – Do not use portable electric or propane heaters. The fire hazard is too great.
- **Storage** – Keep aisle ways clear. Store fuel powered equipment in a separate storage area vented to the outside.
- **Refueling** – Fires that occur during refueling can usually be prevented if the boater is careful not to spill the fuel or overfill the tanks. Let the engine cool and turn off the electrical systems before refueling. Use a funnel so you won't spill gasoline if a sudden wave tips the boat. Extinguish all smoking material.
- **Ventilation** – Comply with Coast Guard ventilation standards. Gasoline vapors can explode. Before starting the engine, operate blower for 4 minutes. Check engine compartment bilge for gas vapors.
- **Batteries** – Ensure proper installation and inspection of all batteries according to manufacturer's instructions. Overcharging and overheating are the two main mistakes that damage batteries.

**3 Protection** - But in case a fire does occur...

- **Fire Extinguishers** - A multi-purpose ABC fire extinguisher that can be used on all types of fires is the best extinguisher option because a variety of fuels may be present. A combination ABC extinguisher can be used on flammable liquids and electrical fires, as well as wood, paper, plastics or rubber.
- **Emergency Procedures** - In a fire emergency, early access to emergency assistance is critical. Have a means of communication available at all times.



*"Prevention Through Education"*

Office of Fire Prevention and Control

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