



Home fire safety fact sheet

Recreational Marine Fire Safety

Marine Fire Safety For Better Boating

Good weather brings boating craft of all types out onto the waters in South Australia.

To enjoy safe boating, it is important to plan ahead and consider a range of simple fire safety measures.

Boat Users Should Take The Following Precautions.

Fuel

Flammable vapours are heavier than air and will accumulate in the lower parts of a vessel.

- Before starting the engine check fuel lines and connections for leaks.
- Allow room for expansion in the fuel tank and wipe up any spillage immediately.
- Remove all rags and materials containing flammable products and place them in a sealed metal container.
- When refuelling make sure all sources of ignition are removed, the engine is cool and all power is off.
- Thoroughly ventilate the boat after fuelling, before switching on the power or starting an engine.
- With vessels powered by inboard petrol engines, ensure that the bilge blowers are activated before starting the engine.
- Install proper ventilation in fuel compartments. Refuel approved portable tanks on shore, **NOT** in the boat.
- Secure spare fuel in a safe place on board.
- Safety equipment
- Carry a fire extinguisher on board at all times and keep it in a readily accessible location – see below.
- Store emergency flares in a waterproof container and use strictly according to manufacturer's operating instructions.



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- Make sure personal flotation devices (PFDs) are readily accessible at all times. The MFS recommends that PFDs should be worn at all times and especially by children and poor swimmers.
- Any vessel on which people sleep should have a smoke alarm installed and checked regularly to ensure correct operation.
- Keep your first aid kit fully stocked and stored in a dry, readily accessible location.

General

- Use only approved marine stoves on board. Turn off gas at the cylinder after use.
- When using launching ramps, parking areas, or sailing on rivers, make sure that the mast and all parts of the rigging remain clear of overhead power lines

Fire Extinguishers

A general-purpose dry powder extinguisher (marked A:B:E and compliant with Australian Standard 1841) will extinguish most small fires on boats. The extinguisher should be shaken regularly to prevent the powder compacting and checked to ensure that the pressure gauge is charged (within the green zone).

The size and number of extinguishers will vary according to the size of the vessel and the amount of flammable liquid you are carrying. Refer to the South Australian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook for flammable liquid quantities. (See link below.)

In addition there is a minimum number of extinguishers required depending on the length of the vessel:

- Powered vessel under eight metres in length - one dry powder fire extinguisher;
- Powered vessel eight to fifteen metres in length - two dry powder fire extinguishers.

The SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) recommends 1A:20B:(E) fire extinguishers for boats.

If There Is A Fire On Board:

- **STOP** the boat immediately to prevent moving air from fanning the flames.
- **DON** Personal Flotation Devices.
- **CLOSE** all hatches, vents and ports, to reduce the oxygen supply in confined spaces, if safe to do so.
- **DIRECT** your dry powder fire extinguisher at the base of the flames. Fight the fire only if safe to do so.
- **NEVER** allow the fire to get between you and the cabin exit.

For further information visit Boating and Marine on the sa.gov.au website:

(<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/boating-and-marine>).