

# RYA Fire Safety

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RYA - Royal Yachting Association



## Top tips: Fire safety

*Fire afloat has been a hazard feared by mariners for centuries and the threat remains today. It's not a scenario any of us like to dwell upon, but it is something you should consider when fitting your boat out for a season on the water.*

Modern materials make the need to make the most of modern fire extinguishers even more important. An example of how quickly things can go wrong can be seen by the recent loss of a brand new Meridian 341 motor cruiser which caught fire shortly after being picked up by owner Paul Ward.

Shortly after leaving the Hamble River the crew were alerted to the danger after hearing irregular noises coming from the engine room.

Mr Ward explains: "I went to have a look and saw blue smoke coming from the exhaust, so I told the crew to turn around. It wasn't until we saw black smoke billowing from the saloon that we realised how serious the situation was."

From this point to the boat becoming consumed in flames took approximately four minutes and although the two crew were rescued, they were badly singed.

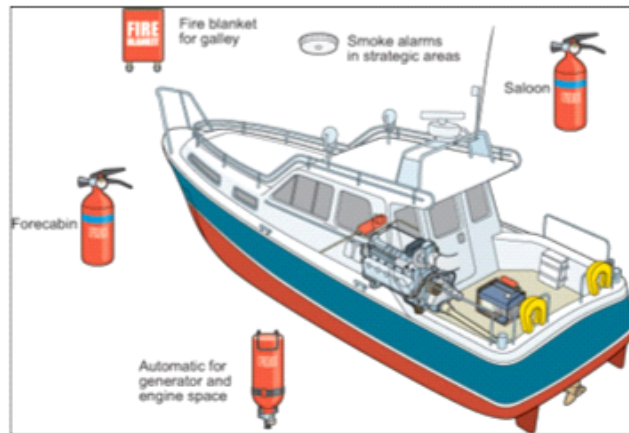
"I want to push home how important it is that you have easy access to a hand held VHF, lifejackets and, if possible, a liferaft. This could happen to any plastic boat." Mr Ward reflected.

### Safety kit

Ok, so this was one case and there is no need to be alarmist, but it does underline the importance of carrying some basic firefighting equipment. These tips, taken from Keith Colwell's **RYA Sea Survival Handbook** should help point you in the right direction:

#### What to carry

Obviously this will vary depending on what size boat you have, but the biggest sportsboat would need to carry the following:



### Types of fire extinguishers

All new extinguishers are red with a colour-coded area to show the type of extinguishant.

They are rated by the types and size of fire for which they are suitable.

- A – carbonaceous (wood, glassfibre, upholstery)
- B – flammable liquids
- C – flammable gases

Sizes are related to a crib of wood for A-type fires and to a pan of flammable liquid for B-type fires. A typical rating is 5A/34B. The higher the number, the bigger the fire the extinguisher can tackle.

### Water (A)

- There is plenty of it around (sea) – collect it in a bucket (tie a lanyard to bucket).

Water fire extinguishers are available but are relatively large and heavy. Water cools the fire. Do not use on liquid, gas, electrical or cooking-fat fires.

### Fire blanket

- Use to smother flames on liquid (cooking oil) or people, thereby depriving the fire of air.

The blanket also makes a good a protective shield when passing close to a fire.

### Dry powder (ABC) Blue

- Use on solids, flammable liquid (petrol/diesel engine fires) and gas fires but not cooking oil.

It is messy but very effective at knocking down flames. It is suffocating when used in enclosed spaces.

Three different types of fire extinguisher: CO<sub>2</sub>, AFFF Foam, and Dry Powder



#### **AFFF foam (AB) Cream**

- Use on solids, flammable liquid (petrol/diesel engine fires) but not cooking-oil, gas or electrical fires.

#### **CO2 (B) Black**

- Used in manual and automatic extinguishers but not often found on boats.

Use on flammable liquid fires but not cooking-oil fires. Do not use on people – expanding gas is cold and can give severe cold burns.

#### **Automatic extinguishers for engine compartments**

Use a single extinguisher of the correct size for the compartment.

#### **Halocarbon gas**

A number of environmentally friendly gas extinguishants are available (FM 200, FE 36) for engine compartments. They are clean to use.

#### **Micro-powder fine powder extinguishant**

Chemically reacts with the fire.

#### **Dry-powder (ABC)**

Similar to a manual extinguisher. Can be used in naturally aspirated engine compartments. Dry powder will damage engines with turbo- or super-chargers.

For further tips on fire fighting and many other aspects of sea survival, you can pick up a copy of **Keith Colwell's RYA Sea Survival Handbook** which is available at a 20% discount until May .

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