

# Flare safety

As a Principal or Chief Instructor, are you aware of the manner in which flares are being demonstrated at your centre? Now would be a good time to take a close look at the control measures in place to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Below are two case studies for you to read. Luckily no-one was hurt during these incidents, but either could have been a very different story.

## Case study 1

During a classroom session a centre used dummy flares and informed the students that the flares were dummies. In addition, they deconstructed a live rocket flare – a practice that had been in place there for some years. The flare in the rocket case had been removed, but they omitted to

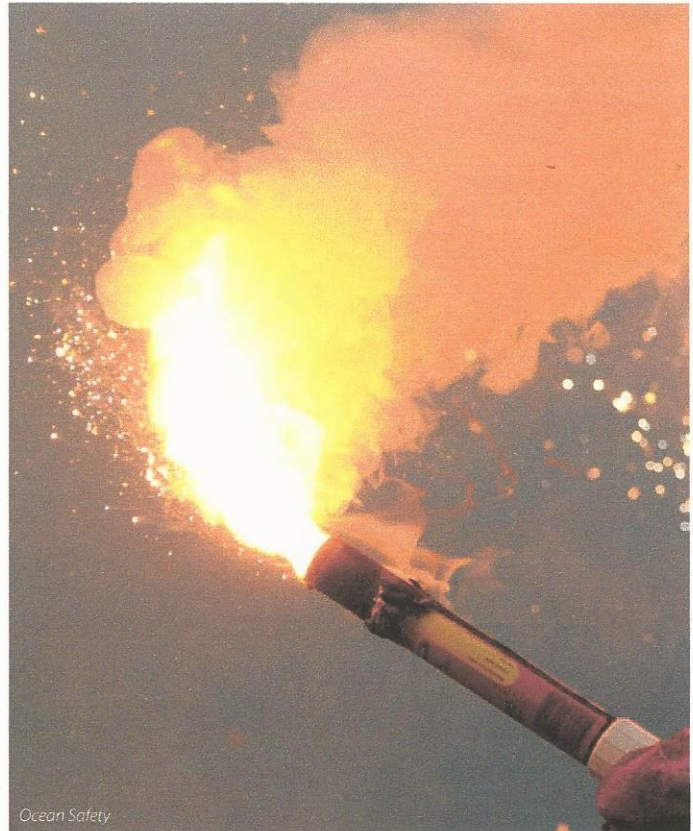
deactivate the flare rocket igniter. The parts (less the flare itself) were passed around the class one at a time. The last person in the group received all the pieces and then elected to re-build it and fire it. The rocket body igniter was then activated. No one was injured but the ceiling was damaged, illustrating the kind of injury that could have occurred.

## Case study 2

A centre was using out of date flares for the practical element of a course. After the first flare was lit with the firing mechanism, subsequent hand held flares were lit sparkler-style by placing the lit one against the end of the unlit one. Unfortunately, one student held his flare loosely and by the wrong end. Once lit, it propelled itself into a car park. Again, luckily, no-one was injured.

## Lessons learned

1. At no stage should live flares be stripped down as part of a course.
2. At no stage should live flares be handled by students in a classroom or below decks, either whole or in pieces.
3. Only official dummy flares, clearly marked as dummies, should be used in a classroom. They should all be checked at the start of the
4. Out of date flares should not be used on a course, nor should they be stored on board as backups.
5. Students should be closely supervised at all times when they have a live flare in their hands. The number of students on the 'firing line' at any given time should be limited to allow close supervision.
6. Course programmes and risk



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assessments should be reviewed frequently.

It is essential to remember that flares are explosives and are therefore classified as hazardous. Whilst instructors may well appreciate this, your students may have no understanding of this.

As can be seen by these two recent incidents the control measures and guidance provided by instructors are the only things that stand between your students and serious injury, or worse.

