

# Safe Boating is No Accident

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Minnesotans love their boats. But everyone who owns or operates a boat needs to invest valuable time before casting off, to ensure a fun and safe boating experience. Fire safety is as important on the water as it is on the land. Most boating fires and explosions that cause millions of dollars in property damages and injure hundreds could be prevented.

*The Minnesota DNR, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the U.S. Coast Guard's federal requirements and safety tips for recreational boating:*

## **Before Casting Off:**

- Make sure all passengers know the location of the fire extinguisher and how to operate it.
- Never use a match or lighter to check fuel connections.

## **While Refueling (most fires and explosions happen during or after fueling):**

- Portable tanks should be refueled ashore.
- Close all hatches and other openings before fueling.
- Extinguish all smoking materials.
- Turn off engines, all electrical equipment, radios, stoves and other appliances.
- Remove all passengers.
- Keep the fill nozzle in contact with the tank.
- Run the blower for least four minutes.
- Check the bilges for fuel vapors before starting the engine.

## **After Refueling:**

- Wipe up or wash off any excess or spilled fuel.
- Again, do the “sniff test”. Do not start the engine until all traces of fuel vapors are eliminated.
- Open all hatches and ports and let the boat air out.
- Remember that gasoline on the water surface can still burn because of the vapors emitted.

## **Fuel Management-Practice the “One-Third Rule” by using:**

- One-third of the fuel going out
- One-third to get back
- One-third in reserve

## **Carbon Monoxide Detectors:**

- CO from engine exhaust builds up inside and outside the boat in areas near exhaust vents. Stay away and do not swim near these areas while propulsion engines or generators are running.
- Schedule regular engine and exhaust system maintenance inspections.
- Be aware that dangerous concentrations of CO can accumulate within seconds.
- Possible CO symptoms include- headache, confusion, fatigue, seizures, dizziness, loss of consciousness, nausea and vomiting. **\*\*If these symptoms are present, get to fresh air and seek medical help immediately.**

- Install and test a battery operated CO detector made for boats

**Fire Extinguishers:**

- All fire extinguishers must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, charged, and readily accessible. When looking for an extinguisher at a store or marine dealer, it is important to look for the words “U.S. Coast Guard Approved” right on the carton.
- Although two sizes of extinguishers are approved for recreational craft (B-1 or B-11), most extinguishers on the market will be B-1. The words “Marine Type USCG Type BC-Size 1” will be in small letters right on the extinguisher’s label along with the approval number. The letter “B” means the extinguisher will put out flammable liquid fires. The letter “C” means it can also be used for electrical fires.

*You are the key to water safety!*