

**FIRES INVOLVING OIL FIRED APPLIANCES****Notice to Shipowners, Shipbuilders, Ship Managers, Masters and Crew  
Members of Small Cargo Ships and Similar Vessels and to Owners,  
Builders, Managers, Skippers and Crew of Fishing Vessels.**

*This Notice supersedes Notice No. M.851*

1. There have recently been several accommodation fires on small fishing vessels and subsequent investigations found that the fires had been caused by oil fired appliances which had neither been installed nor operated in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. In several cases the appliance had not been fitted with any device by which the fuel supply could be shut off in the event of fire. In one particular case resulting in loss of life, in which a fire had been caused by overheating of the uptake, the safety features designed to shut down the heater in the event of fire had been removed.
2. Any oil fired appliance, whether it is an accommodation space heater, galley stove or similar appliance should be installed and operated in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations including those for siting the fuel supply and making arrangements for the flue from the appliance. In addition, the fuel shut off valve to any oil fired appliance should be readily identifiable and sufficiently remote from the appliance so as to be accessible in the event of a fire involving the appliance.
3. The appliance should be regularly and frequently examined to ensure that it is maintained in a condition that will enable it to operate properly. Particular attention should be given to the controls for regulating the oil supply, to the means fitted to shut down the heater in the event of fire and to the security of the oil connections.
4. When installing an oil fired appliance in accommodation or other enclosed spaces particular attention must be given to the provision of adequate ventilation and again the manufacturers recommendations should be followed. The ventilation arrangements should be regularly and frequently examined to ensure that they are not obstructed or have not been interfered with and that any moving parts can be operated satisfactorily. Oil fired heating boilers should operate on forced draught with suitable safety features to cater for flame failure. It is strongly recommended that such boilers should not be operated using natural draught as this may result in a blow back in variable wind conditions.
5. The attention of Shipowners and Masters of Cargo Ships is drawn to the provisions of Regulations 14(3) and 14(5) of the Merchant Shipping (Crew Accommodation) Regulations 1978 which indicate that:

- (a) a heating appliance shall be provided with a means of turning it on or off or controlling the heat without the use of a tool or key and such means shall be, wherever reasonably practicable, within the space in which the appliance is fitted;
- (b) the heating appliance shall not be affected by the use or non-use of the ships machinery, calorifiers or cooking appliances; and
- (c) the heating appliance shall be constructed and installed and if necessary shielded so as to avoid risk of fire or of danger or discomfort to the crew.

Regulation 38(1) of the above Regulations requires that all equipment and installations shall be maintained in good working order, and Regulation 38(2) requires a Master to inspect crew accommodation and record defects in the Official Log Book.

6. The attention of Owners and Skippers of Fishing Vessels is drawn to the provisions of Regulations 14(3) and 14(5) and Regulations 35(1) and 35(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Crew Accommodation) (Fishing Vessels) Regulations 1975 which are similar to those of the Regulations referred to in Paragraph 5 above.

7. The Owners and Skippers of Fishing Vessels are reminded that where the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975 apply, the installation of space heaters and cooking stoves shall be in accordance with Rules 32 and 61(2) of these Rules. The relevant requirements of these Rules are as follows:

- (a) Where a heating or cooking appliance is supplied with fuel from an oil tank, the tank shall be situated outside the space containing the appliance and the oil supply shall be capable of being controlled from outside that space.
- (b) Appliances using oil fuel having a flash point of less than 60°C (Closed Test) shall not be fitted.
- (c) Means shall be provided to shut off the fuel supply automatically at the appliance in the event of a fire or failure of the air supply. The means shall require manual resetting in order to restore the fuel supply.
- (d) The oil tank supplying the appliance shall be provided with an air pipe leading to a position in the open air where there is no danger of fire or explosion from the oil vapours. The open end of the pipe shall be fitted with a detachable wire gauze diaphragm.
- (e) Means shall be provided for filling the oil tank and for preventing overpressure.
- (f) Appliances shall be secured in position and their exhausts and the surrounding structure shall be adequately protected against fire. Exhausts shall be provided with ready means of cleaning. Dampers fitted in exhausts shall provide an adequate flow of air when in the closed position.

- (g) Ventilators which are used to provide an adequate supply of air to a heating or cooking appliance shall not be capable of being closed.
8. It is strongly recommended that the installation of space heaters and cooking stoves in Fishing Vessels of less than 12 metres in length to which Rules 32 and 61(2) of the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975 do not apply should be generally in accordance with the requirements of these Rules indicated in Paragraph 7 above.
9. Combustible bulkheads, ceilings, linings and furniture should be protected from adjacent oil fired appliances such as galley ranges, space heaters etc by non-combustible board type materials not containing asbestos.
10. Oil fired appliances such as galley ranges, space heaters etc should not be used for drying clothing, linen etc because of the danger that such clothing, linen etc may interfere with the ventilation arrangements of the appliance or fall onto the appliance and catch fire. Curtains and other hanging textile materials should not overhang or be fitted sufficiently close to an oil fired appliance where there is any danger of them coming into contact with the appliance.

Department of Transport  
Marine Directorate  
London WC1V 6LP  
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