

SAFETY BULLETIN No.3 of 2014

DANGER OF INADEQUATE SIMPLE MAINTENANCE CHECKS

We have identified a recent increasing trend in the number of narrow boats and recreational motor vessels suffering mechanical breakdown. From the beginning of April until mid-May, there have been 11 such incidents in Central London, an average of 2 incidents per week.

The reasons behind each of these incidents vary slightly, but each could have been avoided if the vessels had been adequately checked prior to departing their berth. We would like to remind all recreational river users to check their engines and other essential mechanical parts to ensure that they are in good working order. Suggested specific checks are:

- Air, fuel and oil filters are clean and fuel filters have been checked for biological infection,
- Fuel and cooling water hoses are in good condition (not perished) and secure,
- Fuel tanks are clean with no water mixed in them (condensation forms over the winter months),
- Ensuring that your vessel has sufficient fuel on board to complete your intended journey,
- Oil levels are correct and oil has been recently changed,
- Header tanks are full and engine cooling intakes are clear,
- Drive and auxiliary belts are in good condition and appropriately tensioned,
- Batteries are charged and the wiring is in good condition,
- Rudder fixings and pintles are in good condition.

“We would also like to remind mariners that the tidal Thames is considered a Category C waterway upriver of Denton Wharf,” where wave heights of up to 1.2m and tidal flows of up to 4 knots may be encountered. Vessels should be fully prepared to meet these conditions, which may require your engine working much harder than normal, making it essential that the engine is in good working order. If engines are underpowered for the tideway, then Masters should consider whether the vessel is suitable to navigate on the tidal Thames.

In case you suffer a mechanical breakdown, the PLA recommends that your anchor is in good working order, ready to be deployed in an emergency and the bitter end of the anchor warp is securely made fast to your vessel. The PLA also recommends the anchor is suitable for the size of vessel; with a sufficient length of chain and rope with a suggested minimum of 5m and 25m respectively. Should you suffer an engine failure or get into difficulty on the tidal Thames, **deploy your anchor as soon as it is safe to do so**, having due regard of your location. Subsequently call London VTS on **VHF Channel 14** (Tel: 020 8855 0315) to advise them of your situation, who will be able to provide some further assistance.



Recreational mariners are very welcome on the tidal Thames, but it is also a busy commercial waterway and it is important for everyone's safety that vessels are able to complete their journey in safety, having been thoroughly checked in advance.

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DAVID PHILLIPS
CHIEF HARBOUR MASTER



Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in the VTS Centres at Gravesend and Woolwich.

www.pla.co.uk

