

SAFETY BULLETIN 03 OF 2022:

Need to ensure adequate ventilation:

Caution with the use of cockpit covers when working or sleeping on vessels

(For attention of all vessel owners, skippers, and crew and contractors working on vessels)

This Safety Bulletin is issued following the completion of the investigation into the fire and explosion aboard the small motor-cruiser INNER MEETING in Saint Helier Harbour on 30th December 2021. The 'Very Serious Marine Accident Investigation Report' can be found on the Ports of Jersey Website.



The fire and explosion aboard INNER MEETING were caused when a build-up of flammable vapour from fumes from the vessel's inboard petrol tank and from the spray paint being used in the cabin was ignited by an electrical spark; at a time when work was being carried out in the cockpit on an electric pump.

The build-up of vapour was facilitated due to the fact that a newly made exposure cover was in place over the vessel's cockpit and was almost entirely closed and all the cabin ports were secured.

As a result of the explosion and fire the two persons aboard INNER MEETING suffered significant burns and the vessel was subsequently so badly damaged that it was scrapped.

Similar issues with the use of exposure covers and resulting lack of ventilation have resulted in fatalities due to Carbon Monoxide or Carbon Dioxide build-up when gas powered heating installations have been used or the engines have been run whilst the vessel has been moored or, very occasionally, at sea.

It is for that reason that commercial and fishing vessels with gas or oil powered heating or cooking facilities are required to have Carbon Monoxide alarms and smoke alarms fitted. Pleasure vessels are also strongly encouraged to fit such alarms.

The use of exposure covers, both as a security measure and for environmental protection, is common; they should, however, be designed so that exhaust vents from accommodation, machinery, and tank spaces are not restricted. If working or sleeping on your vessel, even during inclement weather, the judicious use of openings for ventilation is essential in order to prevent the build up of concentrations of vapour or gasses which could be hazardous.