



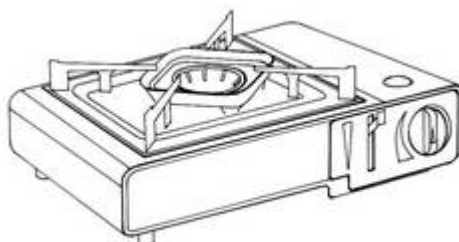
April 2009

NR 00109

PORTABLE GAS STOVE SAFETY ALERT

A safety alert has been issued to boaters about portable gas cookers with integral gas canisters following incidents where people have been seriously burnt. The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is with Hampshire County Council through its Trading Standards service, urging boat owners to take extra care to follow the manufacturers' operating instructions for these stoves and to not use them onboard boats.

The message relates to the widely available and relatively cheap, small, portable stoves with a compartment for an aerosol type gas canister. The stoves have a generally flat profile and are mostly a square or rectangular shape which is about the size of a brief case or cereal box.



With some of these stoves, it is possible to use the appliance with the pan support or spill tray the wrong way up. This is especially relevant to those models which fit in their carry cases with the pan support or spill tray upside down. A number of accidents onshore in the UK have happened because the pan supports were not the right way up when the cooker is being used.

"It seems that with the pan support upside down and the burner on, heat is transferred onto the aerosol type gas canister in the body of the stove and after a time, the canister can burst causing a violent explosion and fireball", said Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Ken Thornber.

"Reading and following the manufacturers' instructions is critical to the safe operation and avoiding the risk of an explosion", he advised.

BSS manager, Graham Watts added, "We are also concerned to ensure boaters stay safe from potential gas leaks from these appliances. While the numbers of boat incidents involving aerosol gas canister stoves are still few, they can be dangerous. We are urging boaters not to use these portable cookers in the poorly ventilated, tight confines of a boat. Even before using them ashore, people need to check the assembly and seals very carefully."

He added “If all you want is a hot drink onboard a day boat, a flask is probably the simplest and safest way. Where a simple cooker is needed aboard, think about installing a marine spirit stove as an alternative to a portable gas cooker.”

While inland waterway regulations do not ban these cookers, when not in operation, the stove and all gas canisters must be stowed in lockers that are self-draining, or on open deck areas where any leaking gas will flow overboard and not where it could cause a pool of explosive vapour inside the boat.

The advice from the BSS and Hampshire County Council Trading Standards is, before you use a portable gas cooker with integral gas canister, please follow these important safety points:

- **Only use the cooker onshore.**
- **Stow the canisters, used or unused and the stove if it has a canister inserted, in a *self-draining* gas locker, or on open deck where any escaping gas can flow overboard.**
- **Check the cooker's condition before each use, if the gas canister seal looks damaged, or if the cooker or gas canister is extremely rusty and deteriorated, do not use it.**
- **Familiarise yourself with the operating instructions before use.**
- **Check if the pan support / spill tray must be turned over after removal from the carry case, to the correct cooking position.**
- **Ensure that you have the correct type of gas canister for your appliance and that it is being inserted in the right place and in the right way.**
- **Do not force the gas canister retaining lever into position. It could damage the mechanical linkage and the pressure relief device.**
- **If you have problems with the retaining lever, check that the pan support / spill tray and gas canister have been correctly installed.**
- **If you still have problems with the lever OR if you have further problems or concerns, do not attempt to light the cooker.**
- **If you smell or hear gas leaking before attempting to light it, don't use it.**
- **If any gas is leaking, ensure that it is being dispersed in free air well away from the boat or any sparks or other sources of ignition.**

– ENDS –

Notes for editors

An illustration of a generic camping stove of the type concerned with this alert is attached.

The work of Hampshire County Council Trading Standards impacts on every resident and commercial enterprise in Hampshire. Trading standards officers visit, inspect, and test, every conceivable type of product or service. We support businesses and the public by giving free legal advice so that the highest standards of quantity, quality, price, description and safety are maintained. We can help with consumer and business advice, safety and standards, fair trading and food, agriculture and animal health.

The BSS is a public safety project owned jointly by British Waterways and the Environment Agency. At least 12 other navigation and harbour authorities have also adopted it. The navigation authorities' purposes for the Scheme are to help reduce the risks of fire, explosion and pollution on small craft. This is done by promoting fire safety and pollution avoidance advice to help boat owners keep themselves and their crews' safe as well as regular examination of fuel systems, gas systems, electrical systems and appliances.