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part one introduction



Bowline

Welcome to the Boat Safety Scheme Guide, an essential handbook for any boater who takes safety seriously and understands the importance of properly installed and maintained boat systems.

This Guide takes you step-by-step through the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) Standards, providing important information not only about each Check List item that an examiner will inspect on your boat, but also explaining why each Check List item is there in the first place.

Reading the Guide before your BSS examination will help you ensure that your boat meets all the requirements for a navigation licence. Detailed information on each Check List item can be found in the relevant chapters, called Parts. A handy Check List of requirements for each Part of the BSS Standards is shown at the end of each chapter helping you assess the condition and compliance of components and fittings on your boat.

Remember though, it's not only just before or just after your BSS examination that you should think about safety. It's your responsibility as much as it's the responsibility of the licensing authority to ensure that your boat and crew are as safe as possible at all times. Because of this, the Guide has been designed as a companion for all responsible boaters to keep on board and refer to whenever the need arises.

It's important to remember this Guide is not a DIY instruction manual on boat construction. It's there to help you if, say, you're thinking of making alterations to your boat's installations or components, and shows you what is acceptable and what you should do to comply with the safety requirements. You should always refer to the manufacturer or supplier, or seek the help of a competent professional, if you intend to replace, modify or repair any part of your boat's installations, components and appliances.

Making reference to the latest editions of relevant British Standards or marine industry codes of practice is also recommended when considering changes to your boat. Further details of these are included in the Guide along with useful contact details for further sources of information.

mandatory and advisory Check List items

The complete set of Boat Safety Scheme Check List items has been split into two categories: Mandatory and Advisory Check List items. Mandatory Checks are those items that British Waterways and the Environment Agency insist your privately-owned boat must comply with since they represent either essential safety requirements or measures designed to prevent environmental pollution. To meet these minimum safety requirements your boat must comply with all Mandatory Check List items before you can apply for a navigation licence.

Advisory Check List items are just that: good advice! Although your privately-owned boat does not have to comply with any of these to get a navigation

licence, each Advisory Check represents best safety practice, particularly for the health and personal safety of those on board your boat. It's strongly recommended that you comply with all of the BSS Check List items regardless of their individual status, since you can then be confident that your boat and its fittings meet a higher safety standard. And that means you and your crew should be safer too!

how to use the Guide

The Guide is split into nine Parts covering the BSS Standards. You'll find an introduction to each Part which explains in general terms what risks are associated with that area of your boat.

Beyond the introduction, each Part explains every Check List item connected with that section of the Standards, and shows why it's important to ensure that your boat comes up to scratch.

It highlights specific risks and ways to minimise them, along with practical illustrations of how to comply with the requirements.



You'll also find real life examples of what can happen when something goes wrong with a boat's installations, components or appliances.

These appear in the Guide in boxes like this.



In addition handy tips from BSS examiners are also included in the Guide to help you pass your examination first time around.

These are shown in boxes like this.

At the end of each Part is a useful Check List which covers every requirement for that particular set of the BSS Standards. Mandatory items are clearly distinguished from Advisory ones, helping you to understand what is absolutely essential for safety and what constitutes best practice.

Where appropriate, sources of further information are listed at the end of each Part, helping you to get further advice if you are unsure about anything connected to the safety of your boat, your crew and those around you. And don't forget that you can always contact the staff at the BSS office (01923 201278) if there's a technical question you need answering.

There's also a clear plastic wallet included in the Guide where you can keep your BSS certificate and other paperwork connected with the safety of your boat, for example invoices for replacement parts or work you may have had done to your boat. This type of complete documentation is also handy if you're thinking about selling the boat, since a prospective buyer will recognise the care you've taken when it comes to ensuring safety.

At the back of the Guide you'll find the full set of BSS Standards which you must refer to if in any doubt about something you read in one of the Parts. Important information about the nature and characteristics of the various fuels found on a boat is also included at the back of this Guide to help you stay out of trouble when out boating on the inland waterways.

must I?

To help you recognise Mandatory and Advisory Check List items as you read through each Part, particular words and phrases have been used.

All descriptions of Mandatory items contain the instruction "must". For example, in Part Two, which covers inboard engines, the following can be found:

All flexible hoses perish over time as a result of the hose material reacting with the fuel. To minimise leaks the fuel filling hose must be made from a material that's suitable for the fuel that it carries.

Descriptions of Advisory items use phrases such as "it's a good idea..." or "it's recommended that...". For example, in Part Two again, the following appears:

Cross contamination, such as petrol being added to the water system, can become a fire hazard. It's recommended that your boat's deck and filling connections are set up in such a way to minimise the risk of this happening.

So, as you read through the Guide, you should be able to spot those requirements that you “must” have, and those requirements that represent best safety practice. It’s “a good idea” to make sure your boat complies with these Check List items too!

the boat safety scheme

The BSS was jointly established in 1997 by the Environment Agency and British Waterways to promote safety on the inland waterways in respect of boats, their installations and components. Meeting these safety Standards in order to obtain a navigation licence became a requirement at the same time. To date, some 45,000 powered craft have successfully met these requirements.

An independent review of the scope of the BSS requirements took place during 2000 and recommended that British Waterways and the Environment Agency re-publish the full set of Check List items split into essential safety or environmental requirements and best safety practice recommendations. Extensive consultation with the boating public, groups representing these people and professional and trade bodies concerned with craft construction and safety standards contributed to this re-published list.

have the BSS Standards been altered?

Not in the slightest. The main part of this Guide is designed to make meeting the Scheme’s requirements a simple process which can be understood by the least technical of people. The full set of BSS Standards is published at the back of this Guide, and you should refer to the relevant page if you are in any doubt about what a particular requirement may involve.

does the boat safety scheme apply to all boats on all inland waterways?

The full set of Boat Safety Scheme requirements applies to all boats based on all British Waterways managed navigations and most Environment Agency waters, with the exception of privately-owned boats used solely for recreational purposes. A navigation licence will be issued to these types of boats that only comply with the Mandatory requirements of the Scheme. Of course, it’s also best safety practice to ensure your privately-owned boat meets the Advisory Check List items too.

The Boat Safety Scheme has been endorsed by all the UK navigation authorities, represented by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA), and will become a requirement for licensing purposes on waters managed by the Broads Authority from January 2005.

If you keep your boat on a waterway managed by any other navigation authority other than British Waterways, The Environment Agency and the Broads Authority, then it's a good idea to contact the authority to see how much of the BSS applies and whether any other regulations are in force.

where can I find out more information?

You can find out more information by contacting either one of the organisations listed at the end of each chapter; your local examiner or waterway office; or the Boat Safety Scheme office. See the back of this Guide for a list of contact details that you can use to find out more.

Alternatively, visit www.britishwaterways.co.uk or www.environment-agency.gov.uk and follow the links to BSS.

what about updates to this Guide?

The Guide has been designed so that it can be updated quickly and easily if the need arises. At the bottom of each page there's a special code which means pages can be updated without disrupting the rest of the Guide.

British Waterways and the Environment Agency will distribute page updates to all powered-boat licence holders as and when appropriate.

your BSS examination

Brian Hayes, Chairman of the Association of Boat Safety Examiners (ABSE), has been closely involved in the development of this Guide.

"We're here to help you as much as possible when it comes to your BSS examination, and this Guide is an important way of helping you understand what needs to be in place on your boat. The information contained here also helps the examiner explain various points to you during the examination.

And don't forget, the examiner wants your boat to pass first time as much as you do. Many of us have boats too, and share a common passion for 'messing about on the river' – safely!

booking the examination

It's always a good idea to book an examination a couple of months before it's due, since if your boat does fail for any reason, you'll still have a reasonable amount of time to put things right.

If you do pass first time around, the examiner will post-date your new certificate to start from the date when the old one expires, meaning you don't lose out on the full four years that each BSS Pass Certificate is valid for.

Finding an examiner is usually quite easy, and there are a number of ways you can do this. Lists of examiners are available on the WWW, from the BSS Office and from local navigation authority outlets such as offices and locks. Details can also be found in the main waterways magazines, or you might like to ask fellow boaters if there's anyone they would recommend.

Be prepared to get two or three quotes, and always have a list of questions to hand so that you can agree the details right at the outset. For example, does the price include the cost of a certificate, are there extra charges if the examiner spends longer inspecting your boat than he expected, and will there be an extra charge if the examiner needs to make a return visit? Sorting these details out can help you make an informed choice when selecting an examiner.

Remember, each examiner is free to set his own charges, and market forces and travelling time will dictate the range of prices given to you.

preparing your boat

Preparing your boat before its examination can really pay off. Apart from checking to see that installations, components and fittings come up to scratch before the examiner arrives, there are several things you can do to make the whole process run smoothly.

- ☞ Have the existing certificate to hand. This will help the examiner with information about the boat, such as when it was constructed, and allow him to confirm the expiry date of your current certificate.

- 🌀 Ensure the boat is fully functional so that a complete examination can take place. This includes having a fully charged battery and sufficient gas and water, along with any other documentation that shows compliance with the BSS requirements.
- 🌀 Provide full access to all gas joints and pipework so that they can be thoroughly inspected. The examiner can use mirrors and a torch where absolutely necessary. Other items such as gas lockers should be unlocked, and boards and panels are removed to give access where necessary.
- 🌀 Notify any landowners that may be required to give access to the examiner so that he can get to where your boat is moored.

By reading the Guide and following this advice, you and your boat should be properly prepared for the day of the examination.

what happens next?

If your boat fails on any of the checks the examiner carries out, whether they are Mandatory or Advisory Check List items, you will receive a status report spelling out what needs to be done. Of course, you can still apply for a navigation licence if your boat only fails on Advisory Check List items, although you should always try to comply with these requirements for your own peace of mind.

If your boat meets all the Check List items, the examiner will issue a status report saying so, backed up with a BSS Pass Certificate dated accordingly. You can now apply for a navigation licence by following the instructions on these documents.

Don't forget, if your boat fails on any Mandatory Check List items you will have to bring these up to standard before a pass certificate can be awarded and a navigation licence applied for. Your examiner will be able to advise you at the time of the examination.

Best wishes with your examination. We hope this Guide helps you to achieve a pass first time around.

