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Mar 2010

NR 003.10

BSS certificate price rise to be frozen for four years

Having held the price of its Certificate for three years, the Boat Safety Scheme is to increase the price that BSS Examiners pay by £5 from April, but the new price will be frozen for four years until April 2014.

Graham Watts the BSS Manager explained: 'We managed to freeze the price of BSS Certificates for the last three years, but having looked at all the options, the price change cannot be avoided.

He said, 'We recognise that this is an additional cost to boaters who are already facing other financial pressures, so we hope that freezing the price for four years will be of help. BSS income being squeezed so we intend to 'invest to save' in order to help stem prices beyond 2014.'

In 2007 the Scheme was asked by its owners British Waterways and the Environment Agency to become self-funding. From April, the Certificates will cost BSS examiners £29 plus VAT each. Certificate sales represent almost 90% of the BSS income all of which is used to cover the costs the work underpinning the BSS examination service, risk research and review and the promotion of boat safety advice. A BSS certificate lasts four years before it has to be renewed.

Further information on the reasons influencing the decision to increase the certificate price can be found at www.boatsafetyscheme.com/info.

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Notes for editors

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.

The BSS examination and certificate BSS certificates have a life span of four years. Navigation authorities using the Scheme usually require a valid BSS certificate at the time of licensing, registration, toll renewal or similar. The certificate is issued to boat that is found to be compliant with all the BSS requirements relevant for that boat. These can be found in the BSS Essential Guide which can be freely downloaded or read on www.boatsafetyscheme.com. The compliance check is carried out by an authorized, independent practitioner known as a BSS examiner.

BSS examiners purchase the certificates from the Boat Safety Scheme. As independent practitioners, they are able to charge for the examination and certification a fee of their choosing, however the expectation is that it will take account of various business costs and

expenses such as travel, insurance, training, equipment and it will also take account of their time examining the vessel, return trips where necessary and administering the examination. Some examiners are VAT registered.

The BSS advice to boat owners is to plan ahead of expiry or licensing dates and get two or three quotes from examiners who are prepared to work in the area. Owners should be clear about what is included in the price. The other important advice is to read carefully through the BSS Essential Guide. It will help to prepare the boat before examination and could reduce the potential re-examination. Preparation can help ensure the boat's installations comply and equally important, that the examiner can see or touch everything that he or she needs to without using a tool to gain access. By following this advice owners can help keep their examination costs as low as possible.