

Questions About Boat Safety Scheme Certification

Is it a legal requirement to have a Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) Certificate when in MLC waters?

From the 1st June 2022 vessel owners in scope of the Scheme are required to have a valid Boat Safety Scheme Certificate to demonstrate that they meet minimum safety requirements.

My boat is very small and may have an outboard motor, do I need BSS Certification?

A BSS Examination is not required in respect of any privately owned, open vessels (i.e. a vessel in which all the accommodation is completely open to the elements) or if it has an enclosed space but has no domestic cooking, heating, refrigerating or lighting appliances installed and it is propelled solely by an outboard engine. Please ask us if you are at all unsure if you need one.

The rules are likely to be different if the boat is in commercial, community or for other public use, or is a workboat. Ask us for more detail about the operating terms and conditions including BSS Certification if your vessel falls within this category.

How do I know if there is a boat examiner near me?

You can check on the [Find An Examiner](#) page to search for an examiner. It's a very simple process and all our examiners are extremely helpful.

How often do I need to get my boat examined?

Once every four years.

Is it expensive?

Boats need to be examined only once every four years and over four years the cost can often be similar to what car owners would have spent on MOTs. Boat owners can use an examiner recommended to them by their marina or boater friends, or they can use the [Find An Examiner](#) page to search for the best value examination locally. The cost of a BSS examination is not set and so it may pay to shop around.

What is the Boat Safety Scheme?

The Boat Safety Scheme, or BSS, is a public safety initiative. Its purpose is to help minimise the risk of boat fires, explosions, or pollution harming visitors to the inland waterways, the waterways' workforce and any other users.

Who's behind it?

It is owned by the Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency and supported by many other navigation and harbour authorities. read more on the BSS [About Us page](#)

Isn't it just more bureaucracy to deal with?

Quite the opposite. The BSS is about taking reasonable practical steps that help boat owners keep safe on the water by following a simple process of minimum safety requirements. These have been developed and reviewed by stakeholders from across the boating spectrum including boat owner organisations, the marine trade, surveyors and navigation authorities.

I'm already very thorough – do I need to be involved?

Without doubt, most boat owners are very thorough in their pursuit of enjoyable boating and keeping themselves and their crew safe. However, examinations have been proven to spot the early development of hazards that would lead to fire, explosion, carbon monoxide poisoning or electrocution.

If I don't engage what happens? How will affect my boating?

The MLC reserves the right to withdraw its permission for any vessel, which qualifies for requiring a BSS, to use or moor on its waterways.

You may also find it affects your boat insurance and your choice of marinas and moorings for fear that your boat could cause damage to yourself or the people around you.

My boat is new, does it need a BSS examination?

The MLC will accept a boat builders Declaration of Conformity or DoC (this must be provided with all new boats sold in Europe) in lieu of a BSS certificate. For part-built boats the Annex IIIa DoC will be accepted for the first year. With complete boats, the Annex XV will be accepted for the first four years.

Self-built boats without a DoC will most need a BSS Certification from day one to support a licence application from 1st June 2022.

I've just bought my boat with a full survey performed by a qualified marine surveyor. Will my boat still need BSS Certification?

Yes, the MLC will require assurance that all qualifying vessels in their waters are verified as meeting the BSS requirements by someone who has been trained and assessed as capable of carrying out BSS examinations to pre-set checking procedures.

My boat's has a current BSS certification, can I assume I'm safe?

You'll have the assurance and peace of mind that the BSS examination brings, but you need to stay aware that things change over time. Something in reasonable condition on the day of examination may alter or deteriorate before the next examination. You may also buy some new equipment, so that needs to be installed in safe way too.

Also it's not just the condition or installation of the system that can be hazardous, the way something is used can introduce unwanted risk – if you want more information on this please visit these web pages at www.boatsafetyscheme.org/stay-safe.