



## Marine Notice No. 61 of 2023

*Notice to all Recreational Craft Users, Fishing Vessel Owners, Skippers, Fishers, Yachtspersons and Seafarers*

### Vessel Refuelling – Risks and Guidance

In response to a safety recommendation by the Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) in the report into the Fire and Loss of a Yacht off the South Coast of Cork on 13 December 2021 (Report No. MCIB/313 No. 2 of 2023), the Department of Transport wishes to highlight the risks associated with refuelling operations or decanting volatile flammable liquids.

The full MCIB report is available on the MCIB website at [www.mcib.ie](http://www.mcib.ie).

#### Improper Refuelling Risks and Guidance

Refuelling of boats can create a risk of fire and/or explosion, leading to loss of life, injury, and significant property and environmental damage. Preventing such events or mitigating their effects requires close attention.

#### Before Fuelling:

- Transferring fuel between containers when at sea is not recommended. You should ensure that your chosen vessel has adequate fuel capacity for the voyage that you are undertaking.
- Make sure you adhere to any marina or mooring-owner guidance and rules on refuelling and the handling of petrol on their sites.
- Familiarize yourself with the instructions for the boat to be refuelled in the refuelling section of the boat's manual. In addition, it is recommended to wear sturdy footwear, secure the boat well to the mooring, turn off the engine and all electrical equipment, and extinguish open fires. There should be no passengers on board the boat. Do not carry out refuelling in the vicinity of exposed hot surfaces.
- To prevent fuel vapour being blown back or flowing down into the boat during refuelling, close all windows, hatches, doors and awnings. Turn off all cooking appliances and other ignition sources before removing any tank or container caps.
- A fire extinguisher should also be kept on board, and a tank fleece (an oil-absorbing cloth) should be used on deck before refuelling.

- Check all bilges for fuel vapour.

### **During Fuelling:**

- Mobile phones and radios should be turned off when refuelling and transferring fuel. Smoking is prohibited. Avoid distractions. The fuel filling nozzle must be attended at all times.
- Avoid decanting petrol from containers, but if you have to, use proprietary anti-spill containers, spouts or nozzles to allow clean and easy, no-spill refuelling.
- Before pouring starts, double check the correct filling point has been selected. If the fuel is spilt or enters an incorrect tank/space, deal with the situation immediately and get help if you have any issues about handling the clean-up safely. Warn people around the boat about what has happened and what you are doing in order to prevent them from igniting the petrol vapour accidentally.
- It is important not to over fuel. A good rule of thumb is to fill the tank only 90 percent full as fuel can expand as temperatures rise.
- Petrol leaks and spills can readily vaporise and ignite in an instant. **Clean up any loose fuel straight away and make sure filler caps are secure after refuelling.**

### **After Fuelling:**

- Before starting the boat's engine, turning any switch or lighting any flame, check once again that no fuel vapours have entered the boat; the extra weight and pressure of the fuel may reveal leaks or weeps that may not be there with less fuel.
- If there is a strong smell of petrol or other fuel, do not assume it is safe to carry on. Open all windows, hatches, doors and covers to ventilate the boat until the smell has gone. If the smell persists, investigate the source.
- Inspect bilge for leakage and fuel odours.
- Ventilate until odours are removed.
- If fitted, run the bilge blower system according to the owner's manual.

### **Further Guidance:**

Install smoke alarms as a part of your general fire safety protection. Early detection of a fire could mean the difference between life and death.

**Note:** Marine Notices are issued purely for maritime safety and navigation reasons and should not be construed as conferring rights or granting permissions.

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