

FIRE ALERT

This information leaflet is prepared by The Caravan Club as part of its free information service to members. The contents are believed correct at date of publication, but the current position may be checked with The Club's Information Office.

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Fire kills, maims and disfigures, so if your caravan should catch fire, the first thing to do is to get everyone out as quickly as possible. Then, and only then, should you start to worry about saving the caravan and your possessions. To protect life and property, it is vital you carry a fire extinguisher; that you carry the correct one and it is positioned correctly in your caravan or motor caravan. You should know how to use it!

Since March 1990 all new trailer caravans sold must by law utilise Combustion Modified High Resilience (CMHR) foam in the upholstery, and must also use match-resistant cushion covers. Although motor caravan converters do not have to comply with this law (it seems senseless, but they are covered by the Department of Transport's umbrella, and trailer caravans by the Department of Trade and Industry), reputable converters will use these materials anyway. If you have an older caravan, consider replacing the covers *and* upholstery. Although there are fire retardant treatments available for fabrics, the danger in old upholstery supplied before the requirements became enforceable is the high combustibility of the foam fillings and the toxic smoke they can produce. Thus, even if existing old covers are treated, the risk is still there, particularly if such covers are worn and there is a chance that the foam filling may become exposed. Where old furnishings are still in use, any foam fillings should be replaced with CMHR foam. If this were done it would be acceptable to retain and treat existing covers. Complete replacement with items complying in full with the regulations is, however, the preferred option.

All National Caravan Council (NCC) approved dealers and manufacturers must fit a smoke detector in all new and second-hand caravans sold since May 1989 (BS 5446 Part 1), although this will not apply to privately sold caravans or those sold by dealers outside the NCC. If your caravan does not have a smoke detector, consider installing one made to the appropriate British Standard (BS 5446 Part 1, EN 54-7) or one that has American UL (Underwriters Laboratory) approval. Also fit one that has a 'hush button' which will desensitise the unit for 10-15 minutes. In the confines of a caravan, any cooking is liable to set it off and if you are frustrated into removing the battery, it somewhat defeats the object of the exercise.

The fire extinguisher you choose should be manufactured in accordance with BS (EN)3 and tested and approved by the British Standards Institute (BSI) or the Loss Prevention Council Certificate Board (LPCB) or approved by the British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE). The Loss Prevention Council is the representative body of the insurance industry for the purpose of approving extinguishers.

A leaflet called 'how to use a fire extinguisher' is available from the Fire Protection Association at London Road, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 0RH, or can be downloaded from the website on www.thefpa.co.uk A list of approved extinguisher manufacturers is available from British Approvals Fire Equipment at Thames House, 29 Thames Street, Kingston-upon-Thames KT1 1PH, or can be downloaded from the website on www.bafe.org.uk BS (EN)3 recommends that extinguishers should be coloured entirely signal RED although a different colour-coded area (indicator) on the body maybe used so that you can, at a glance, determine the contents, as follows:

Signal red = water
Pale cream = foam
French blue = powder
Carbon Dioxide = black.

The extinguishers also illustrate the kind of fires they will tackle. In the examples below, The left- hand cylinders have cream marking (ie foam) while the right hand ones are marked in blue (powder).



The British Standard Code of Practice for the selection and installation of fire extinguishers is classified according to the alphabet. E.g. A=Water = Organic material, such as wood, B= Flammable Liquids = petrol and diesel etc.

General

Fire risks are classified according to the alphabet.

Class A risks	Involve most organic materials. That is those containing carbon, such as textiles, wood and paper.
Class B risks	Include petrol, diesel, solvents, paints and other flammable liquids.
Class C risks	Include butane and propane Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), flammable gases.
Class D risks	Refer to vehicle protection and certain flammable metals
Class F risks	Fires including cooking oils and fats
Electrical Fires	This classification is no longer used. Fires involving electrical apparatus must always be tackled by first isolating the electricity supply and then by the use of dry powder or CO² fire extinguishers

Types of extinguisher and their uses

Dry powder – Class A to D and fires including those involving electrical apparatus

Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) – Class A, B and F

Water – Class A

CO² – Class B Electrical hazards

Aerosol Fire Extinguishers are NOT recommended. If you have one in your caravan, your car or your home, you are advised to replace it with an approved fire fighting appliance.

Efficient fire fighting depends on having the right extinguisher available at the right time for each type of fire, foolproof in operation and ready for instant use. Although dry powder fire extinguishers are very effective in extinguishing all fires, they are not recommended for use in confined spaces, eg buildings, especially caravans. The Club has decided that AFFF (please refer to page 5 for list of suppliers) is the most effective for use on a caravan site and would recommend its use.

It is important that your extinguisher is checked at regular intervals in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions (if in doubt about how to do this consult the extinguisher supplier), although servicing of these units tends to be relatively costly. For private users, replacement is generally an easier and more economic option. The Club's health and safety officer suggests a typical life expectancy for a caravan extinguisher of 3-5 years. On no account should a used extinguisher be returned to service, even if not completely discharged. Careful thought is necessary on

positioning the extinguisher, which should be near the door but not too close to cooking appliances, where sudden flames could make it unreachable.

It is better not to use a fire extinguisher on a frying pan fire unless you know exactly what you are doing. If you get it wrong, you could end up driving the burning oil/fat out of the pan onto curtains etc, making the situation worse. There are fire blankets which work by smothering the flames and they are very useful for putting out fires involving clothing and cooking oil/fat fires. The fire blanket should conform to BSEN 1869, the latest European and British Standard. The older, plain glass fibre types can let flammable vapours through the weave. The latest types have a coating to minimise this problem - again, look for the British Standard Kitemark or approval by LPC or BAFE.

There are many potential sources of caravan fires, not all obvious - how many of the following may apply to you?

- Smokers' materials, burning cigarettes, discarded matches etc.
- Pressurised containers, eg hairspray, shaving foam, insect spray, kept in a cupboard adjacent to heat source (eg oven, space heater),
- Tubes of adhesive, paint, varnish etc also kept in cupboards adjacent to heat source,
- DIY installations of heaters, ovens etc with no attention paid to shielding adjacent caravan structure from heat,
- Portable LPG/paraffin heaters in use,
- 12V or 240V wiring incorrectly fused, wire runs squashed by items hurriedly loaded into caravan lockers,
- Clothes being left to dry near heaters, bedding left touching heaters,
- Curtains or blinds falling too close to heaters or cooking appliances,
- Crocodile clips used on battery terminals instead of clamps - any other unsecured wiring,
- Under-bed lockers stuffed full of sleeping bags, pillows etc, smothering the battery, mains isolating box, RCD, caravan vents etc.,
- Several mains appliances run off a single 3 pin socket, possibly incorrectly fused....

We could go on, but remember, if you wouldn't do these sorts of things at home (and we hope you wouldn't) why forget about safety when on holiday?

To prevent the spread of fire should an unfortunate incident occur, it is important that sited touring caravans are adequately spaced. On reputable sites, you should be placed with at least 6 metres between caravan walls and at least 3 metres clear between associated equipment (eg. car, awning) and the adjacent caravan. However, on CLs and rally fields it is often up to you to ensure you are properly spaced. With awnings or tents around, particularly in barbecue season, it is wise to keep a full bucket of water handy outside the caravan/awning for emergencies.

Barbecues are permitted on Club Sites unless a notice to the contrary is displayed. However, do not leave barbecues unattended and make sure spent charcoal is properly cooled down before discarding.

Petrol-engine cars are now mostly equipped with catalytic converters which generate a great deal of heat and take longer to cool down than conventional exhausts. Although heat shields are used, long, dry grass could come into contact with the 'cat' and a fire could result. If driving a 'cat' car, take care where you park.

Following the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, all caravan sites have fire risk assessments available on site. All members and visitors to site should adhere to these as instructed by the wardens.

1 litre and / or 2 litre AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam) are available from the following websites:

www.medisave.co.uk – telephone number 0800 8046447

www.fireprotectioncentre.com – telephone number 01724 854199

www.safelincs.co.uk – telephone number 0800 512 2946

www.puresafety.co.uk – telephone number 0800 4082222

http://www.fireandsafetycentre.co.uk/Products/748/2_litre_AFFF_fire_extinguisher_and_Photoluminescent_ID_Sign.html

<http://www.nationwidefireextinguishers.co.uk/p489846/1ltr-afff-foam-fire-extinguisher.html>

<http://www.fireprotectiononline.co.uk/2-litre-foam-fire-extinguisher.html>

You should have a fire safety procedure notice displayed in your caravan; if not, use the one below:

FIRE SAFETY PROCEDURE

IN CASE OF FIRE

1. GET EVERYONE OUT
2. RAISE THE ALARM AND CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE
3. TURN OFF OUTSIDE LPG VALVE **ONLY** IF SAFE TO DO SO WITHOUT ENDANGERING LIFE
4. DISCONNECT MAINS ELECTRICITY SUPPLY, IF SAFE TO DO SO WITHOUT ENDANGERING LIFE.
5. TACKLE THE FIRE **ONLY** IF SAFE TO DO SO – IF YOU CANNOT CONTROL IT SET WELL AWAY AND KEEP OTHERS OUT OF THE AREA.
6. ENSURE SITE WARDEN/MANAGER IS INFORMED

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

- NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN OR ANIMALS / PETS UNATTENDED IN A CARAVAN
- MAKE SURE EVERYONE KNOWS THE LOCATION AND OPERATION OF THE ESCAPE ROUTES. KEEP ALL ESCAPE ROUTES CLEAR
- KEEP COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS CLEAR OF ALL HEATING AND COOKING APPLIANCES
- INSTALL THE APPROPRIATE FIRE-FIGHTING EQUIPMENT AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE KNOWS HOW TO USE IT
- MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE FIRE PRECAUTION ARRANGEMENTS ON SITE, AND WHERE THE NEAREST WATER POINT, FIRE EXTINGUISHER AND TELEPHONE IS LOCATED
- KEEP MATCHES OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN
- IF YOU SMOKE USE METAL ASHTRAYS
- NEVER SMOKE IN BED
- CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT ALONE IN A CARAVAN