



Fire and Blood: How Marina Owners and Operators Can Avoid 2 Biggest Fueling Hazards This Summer

Insights

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The seemingly mundane task of fueling a boat is fraught with hidden risks and potential liability for marina owners and operators, especially when it comes to dangers from fire and bloodborne pathogens. As you navigate the peak of the summer busy season, you can go a long way towards ensuring the safety and health of your staff and patrons by minimizing fire risks and protecting them from bloodborne pathogens during the fueling process. What practical insights and actionable steps can you take at the fuel station to maintain a safe environment during your busiest time of the year?

Fire Standards Go Further Than You Might Think

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has set a series of consensus standards for fire prevention in marina and boatyard facilities that you should use as your guide. They provide guidance for best fire prevention practices not only during marine fueling but also for other areas of the marina including dry-stack buildings, service areas, and storage.

Some states have adopted these standards as part of their fire code, while others have adopted similar consensus standards. Work with your safety counsel to determine the correct standards governing your marina.

Best Fire Prevention Strategies

As we discussed [in our summer preview Insight](#), there are some specific steps you should consider taking when it comes to fire safety.

Multiple regulatory standards – for example, from OSHA to the NFPA – dictate the proper use, size, and location of fire extinguishers. For example, NFPA regulations say that the maximum travel distance to an extinguisher should be 75 feet. They also say that you must have an 80B:C-type fire extinguisher within 100 feet of a fuel pump.

It is also helpful to have Fire Carts or Fire Pumps when responding to fuel fires. The NFPA also states marinas should implement safe fueling practices – which includes specific signage, spill containment measures, and emergency fuel shut-off procedures.

Finally, only properly trained employees should attempt to respond to a fire emergency, so make sure you have identified such personnel and communicated these rules to all of your workers.

Bloodborne Rules Need to be Taken Seriously

Federal workplace safety officials have identified “bloodborne pathogens” to include microorganisms present in all sorts of bodily fluids such as blood, urine, vomit, or feces – all of which can cause disease in humans. The most common types of illnesses stemming from contact with these fluids include Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), MRSA, or other forms of Staphylococcus infections.

In a marina, a common cause of exposure to bloodborne pathogens comes during the pump-out process. Since the septic (black) tank on a vessel may be pressurized, it may expel waste when opened. Likewise, the pump-out hose may not be properly attached to the vessel, which could cause employees to be sprayed with waste. Another area of exposure could arise when cleaning up restrooms after a customer who has consumed too much alcohol has vomited.

5 Steps to Create Bloodborne Pathogen Safety

- You should require employees conducting pump-out procedures to wear disposable gloves and eye protection.
- After the pump out, require your employees to wash their hands with antibacterial soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer.
- Provide your employees with supplies and easy access for cleaning pump-out attachments and hoses. They can place fittings in a bucket filled with a water/bleach solution and pump the solution through the hose.
- Consider requiring employees to bring an extra change of clothes in case of exposure to bloodborne pathogens or other materials.
- Assess your premises to determine if your workers should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in other areas. For example, leather gloves can help avoid sharp objects that may be discarded in a trash can or elsewhere on the premises. You can also install a “sharps” disposal unit in each restroom and hire a third-party service to handle disposal.

What if an Employee is Exposed?

In the event an employee is exposed to bloodborne pathogens, you should take several specific actions.

- First, it is imperative to document the circumstances of the exposure and the source where possible.

- Offer a post-exposure medical evaluation by a healthcare professional. With employee permission, this evaluation may include testing the exposed employee's blood.
- Additionally, you should make the Hepatitis B vaccine available. Should the employee decline the vaccine, document the offer and decline. You are responsible for any post-exposure medical cost.

Conclusion

By implementing these safety measures, marina owners can help protect the health and well-being of employees and patrons at the fuel station, ensuring a safer and more comfortable environment for everyone involved. We will continue to monitor this area of the law and provide updates as warranted. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information on workplace safety issues. If you have any questions, contact the authors of this Insight, your Fisher Phillips attorney, or any member of our [Workplace Safety Practice Group](#).

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