

River Readiness: Pre-Departure Checks for Pleasure Vessels & Narrowboats

SAFETY BULLETIN

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In recent years, Spring and Summer has seen an increase in pleasure vessels and narrowboats suffering mechanical breakdown. These incidents vary in type and severity, but are often easily preventable with proper pre-departure checks and by following industry best practice.

We remind all recreational river users to step up their vigilance and avoid the consequences of neglect to reduce breakdowns. Please check your engines, fuel, electrics, radios, anchors and other essential parts to ensure that they are in good working order and ready in an emergency.

Suggested specific questions to have in mind for users

- Are the air, fuel and oil filters clean and free from biological infection?
- Are the cooling systems (tanks, hoses and **in particular impellers**) in good condition, not perished, secure and free from blockages?
- Are the fuel tanks and hoses clean, free from water and other contaminants and secure? (Significant condensation can occur through the Winter months).
- Does my vessel have enough fuel for the journey?
- Are the oil levels correct and has the oil been recently changed?
- Are the drive and auxiliary belts in good condition and properly tensioned?
- Are your batteries charged and with good wiring?
- Is your rudder and it's fixings in good condition?
- Is your VHF working correctly? (Perform a radio check with London VTS).
- Is the anchor suitable for the vessel's tonnage, the nature of the riverbed, with sufficient chain and warp and the bitter end made fast? (It's suggested that a minimum of chain and rope should be 5m and 25m respectively for the Tideway. PLA charts should also be assessed for safe anchorages).

Mariners are reminded the Tidal Thames is a Category C waterway above Denton Wharf, where wave heights of up to 1.2m and tidal flows of up to 4 knots can be encountered and sometimes exceeded.

Vessels should be fully prepared to meet these conditions, which often require engines to work much harder than normal. If engines are underpowered or not maintained for the Tideway, Masters should consider

Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in the VTS Centre



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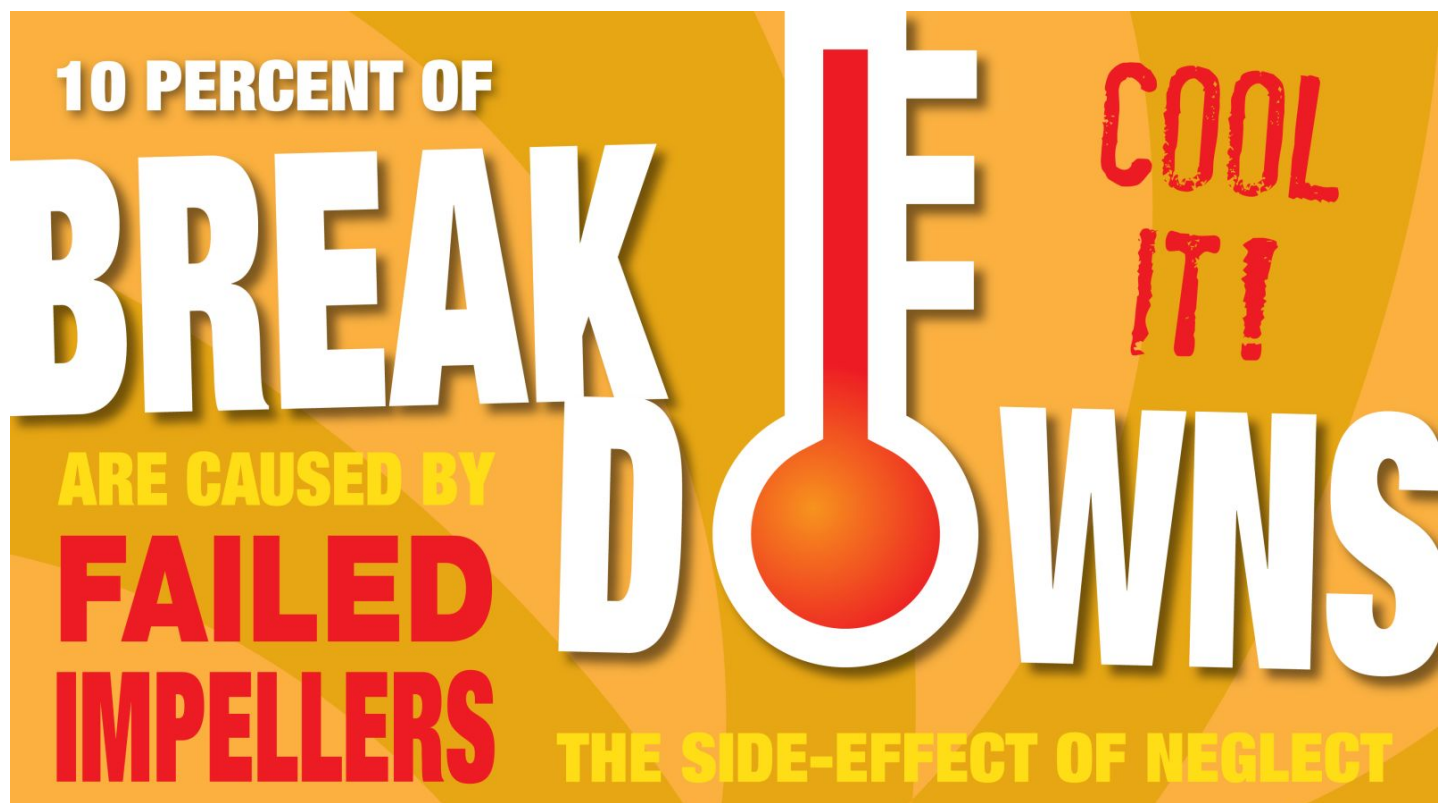
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whether the vessel is suitable for navigation. Please note that the calm waters of the UK's canal system may allow defects such as contaminated fuel or perished cooling systems to go unnoticed. However, once a vessel enters waters that agitate contaminants like dirt in the tanks and demands more from engines; these deficiencies can cause significant failures, blockages and ultimately dangerous situations.

If you suffer a mechanical breakdown, ensure your anchor is ready for emergency deployment. If you get into difficulty, with due regard of your location please call London VTS via VHF (Tel: 020 326 07711) to advise them of the situation. In an emergency you can call London Coastguard on Channel 16 (Tel: 999 and ask for coastguard).

Recreational mariners are very welcome on the tidal Thames, but it is also a busy commercial waterway, and it is important for everyone's safety that vessels can complete their journey without putting the crew and passengers on your vessel or others at risk.



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