

Disposing of out of date flares

Flares are ultimately explosives, therefore once they are past their useful lifespan it is essential that they are disposed of carefully.

It is illegal to dump flares at sea, illegal to dump them on land and illegal to let them off in anything other than an emergency.

If you have out of date flares and need to arrange their safe disposal, in the first instance you should contact the supplier you bought them from to see if they will take them back. A local liferaft service agent may also be able to take your out of date flares from you as they deal with the disposal of such items on a regular basis. It is also worth checking if your local port or marina will accept them.

Often referred to as Time Expired Pyrotechnics (TEP), they are hazardous goods not hazardous waste, there is therefore no requirement for councils to provide facilities for disposal, however some may and you should check with your local authority.

You can also check with the local police or fire brigade; of course neither is a 'refuse collection and disposal agency' but in some areas they will accept out of date flares.

Specialist hazardous waste disposal companies will generally be able to accept out of date flares, but the cost for such a service is unlikely to be as attractive as any of the previous suggestion.

Recreational boaters can as a final option contact the local Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) to make an appointment to deposit their out of date marine flares at one of the designated sites, although appointments will not necessarily be available immediately as the HM Coastguard designated stores have limited storage capacities. The Coastguard will not accept TEP from any commercial organisations. They will need to make their own arrangements either with the supplier of their flares or if they do not provide a disposal service, with a specialist hazardous waste disposal company. There are 18 HM Coastguard designated stores. They are listed in the MCA's leaflet together with the telephone number you should call to make an appointment. General information provided by the MCA can be found on their website www.mcga.gov.uk.