

Cabin fire caused by light fitting overheating

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What happened?

A vessel experienced a minor fire in the bathroom of an unoccupied cabin due to a light fixture failing/shorting.

A crew member who was resting in another cabin nearby, smelt something odd and investigated.

When he got near the unoccupied cabin, he noticed a little smoke coming out of the door vent.

He opened the door and noticed the smoke was coming from the cabin's bathroom door vent. He cracked the door and saw the toilet lid was burning.

He left the cabin, grabbed the closest portable extinguisher, put the small fire out then immediately notified the Bridge.

What were the causes?

The fire started when the ceiling light fixture overheated due to an internal failure/short at the bulb connection point.

Due to the overheating, the light's plastic cover melted and dripped onto the toilet lid, setting it on fire, which then scorched the wall.

Actions

- Have regular inspections of unoccupied cabins and other spaces; if possible and appropriate, electrically isolate such spaces. Ensure everything is powered off including lights. Consider locking all unoccupied rooms once they have been inspected and rendered safe from potential fire sources.
- Ensure that portable fire extinguishers and all other types of firefighting equipment are always kept in place in their designated stations in operable condition and ready for immediate and effective use.
- Inspect all cabin light fixtures by removing covers/shrouds to identify any noticeable signs of deterioration/corrosion, etc., or other issues of concern. Remedial actions should be left to the engineers; crew members should not attempt to remedy such concerns themselves.

- Finally, highlight the one thing that prevented this scenario from resulting in a much worse incident was the crew member who became uneasy when he smelled something odd and checked it out.
- **If you see signs of or an actual fire, raise the alarm! Never investigate further or tackle the fire unless it is safe to do so.**

Members may wish to refer to

- Diver helmet hat light [*strong smell of smoke was investigated*]
- 'Routine' task, non-routine result: Batteries stored sideways leak battery acid [*Crew...noticed a smell, and investigated*]
- Near-miss: burnt out electrical socket

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