



MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

March 21, 2013
Washington, DC

Alert 01-13

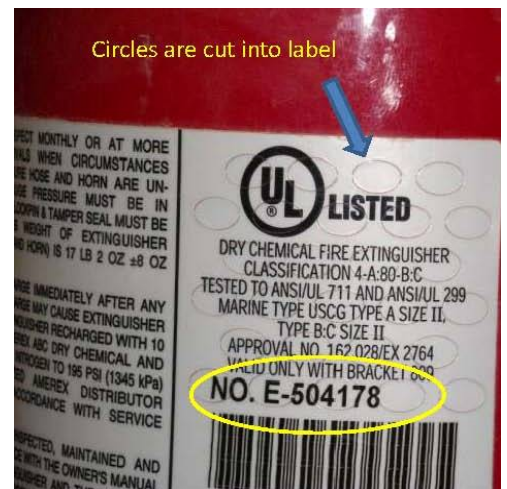
Counterfeit Portable Fire Extinguishers

The Coast Guard has recently become aware of counterfeits of *U.S. Coast Guard approved* portable fire extinguishers manufactured by Amerex Corporation and Buckeye Fire Equipment. Both companies are major producers of genuine approved fire extinguishing equipment and serve a worldwide market. These counterfeit extinguishers present a significant safety hazard. Their capability to extinguish a fire is unproven; they may be charged with a powdery substance that is not a fire extinguishing agent, the pressure cylinder is not DOT approved, and the pressure gauge may not function or give false readings.

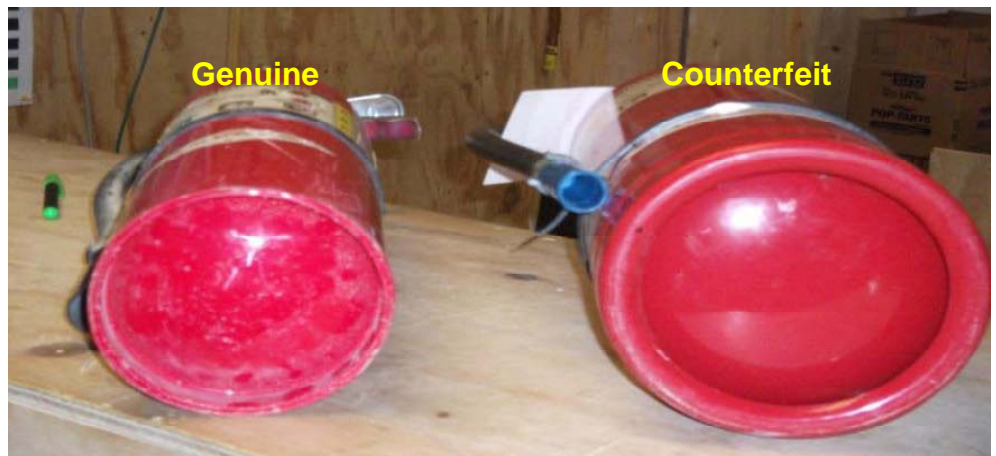
The dry-chemical counterfeit extinguishers are size B-II and may be identified by several distinguishing features:

Counterfeit units may have duplicate serial numbers. Genuine approved extinguishers will have a unique serial number for each extinguisher. For counterfeit Amerex extinguishers, the serial No V-654690 has been reported. There may be other serial numbers used on the counterfeits. For counterfeit Buckeye extinguishers, the serial No K-094927 with a red handle and serial No YM-U76222 with a black handle have been reported.

The labels on counterfeit extinguishers may be simply printed. Labels on genuine approved extinguishers will include a security imprint / texture behind the UL LISTED logo, classification, testing and approval data. Genuine Amerex Corporation extinguishers will have a pattern of scored "circles," and genuine Buckeye Fire Equipment extinguishers will have the letter "S" scored into the label.



The bottoms of the counterfeits have a rounded curved-in lip as shown on the right side of the image on the right. The bottom of a genuine Amerex extinguisher is shown on the left side of the image. Genuine Buckeye extinguishers will have a date stamped on the bottom.





The counterfeit extinguishers have been reported to have black or red plastic handles. Genuine approved dry-chemical B-II extinguishers typically have handles that are constructed of silver-colored aluminum (although there are some with plastic handles).

Pressure gauges on the counterfeit units may be the wrong color. The gauges on genuine approved Buckeye dry-chemical extinguishers will have a red background.

Counterfeit extinguishers may have welded seams on the sides of the cylinders.

The Coast Guard believes that counterfeit production is not limited to Amerex Corporation and Buckeye Fire Equipment. There has been unconfirmed mention of a possible case with Badger portable fire extinguishers. However, at this time there have been no confirmed reports of counterfeit units from other manufacturers.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that vessel owner / operators inspect their equipment. Inspectors, surveyors, owner / operators and others suspecting that they may have identified counterfeit extinguishers should contact the Coast Guard Office of Design and Engineering Standards immediately. Please provide a description of the suspect units, including if possible photographs showing full front, rear, and bottom views of the extinguishers, along with close-ups of all labels, and submit this information to typeapproval@uscg.mil with a copy to anticounterfeiting@us.ul.com.

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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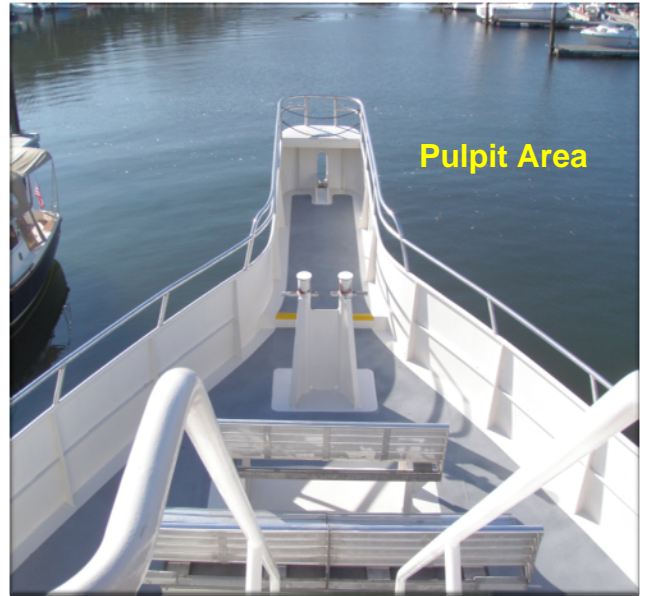
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02-13

BOW RIDING IN HEAVY WEATHER

Don't get bounced!

Several passengers standing in the bow pulpit of a 106' inspected whale watching vessel were injured while underway. The vessel struck a large wave, its bow rose and slammed down causing the passengers in the pulpit to lose their balance and fall to the deck. Injuries ranged from cuts and bruises to a broken patella (knee) and jaw. Although there were many other passengers on board at the time, only the passengers standing in the pulpit were injured.



The investigation concluded that:

- Proper verbal briefings regarding unfavorable weather conditions were made to the passengers; however, some passengers had disregarded these safety warnings.
- The vessel did not have a policy which outlined operational conditions as to when the bow area and pulpit should be vacated.

The master's judgment is crucial in considering securing access to the bow area when the vessel is operating in less than ideal sea conditions. As the sea state and speed of the vessel increases, the likelihood of the vessel experiencing sudden and erratic motion also increases. These circumstances and passenger demographics should be considered when determining if the closure of the bow area is necessary.

As a result of this casualty, the Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that all vessel owners/operators operating vessels with bow areas open to passengers establish written policy and procedures for vacating the area when operational conditions present risks of injury. The policy and procedures should address the vessel's speed and sea state, in addition informing passengers during the pre-departure safety brief of the restrictions prior to getting underway.

This safety alert is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational or material requirement. Developed and distributed by the Investigations Office of Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England and the Office of Investigations and Analysis, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC.
