



BLACKOUT

What effect did the Blackout have on people's lives?

Source 1



Government Poster warning about the dangers of the Blackout. 1939



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Source 2

NOTES FOR A DEBATE ON ROAD ACCIDENTS.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

23rd January, 1940.

2. By far the greater part of the fatal accidents take place during the "black-out". Figures were obtained specially for October, November and December to show the number of persons killed during the "hours of darkness" (i.e. the "black-out") and are as follows:-

	<u>Hours of Darkness.</u>	<u>"Other" hours.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
			1130
October	564	355	919
November	674	252	926
December	896	260	1,156

The "black-out" casualties increase as the days grow shorter

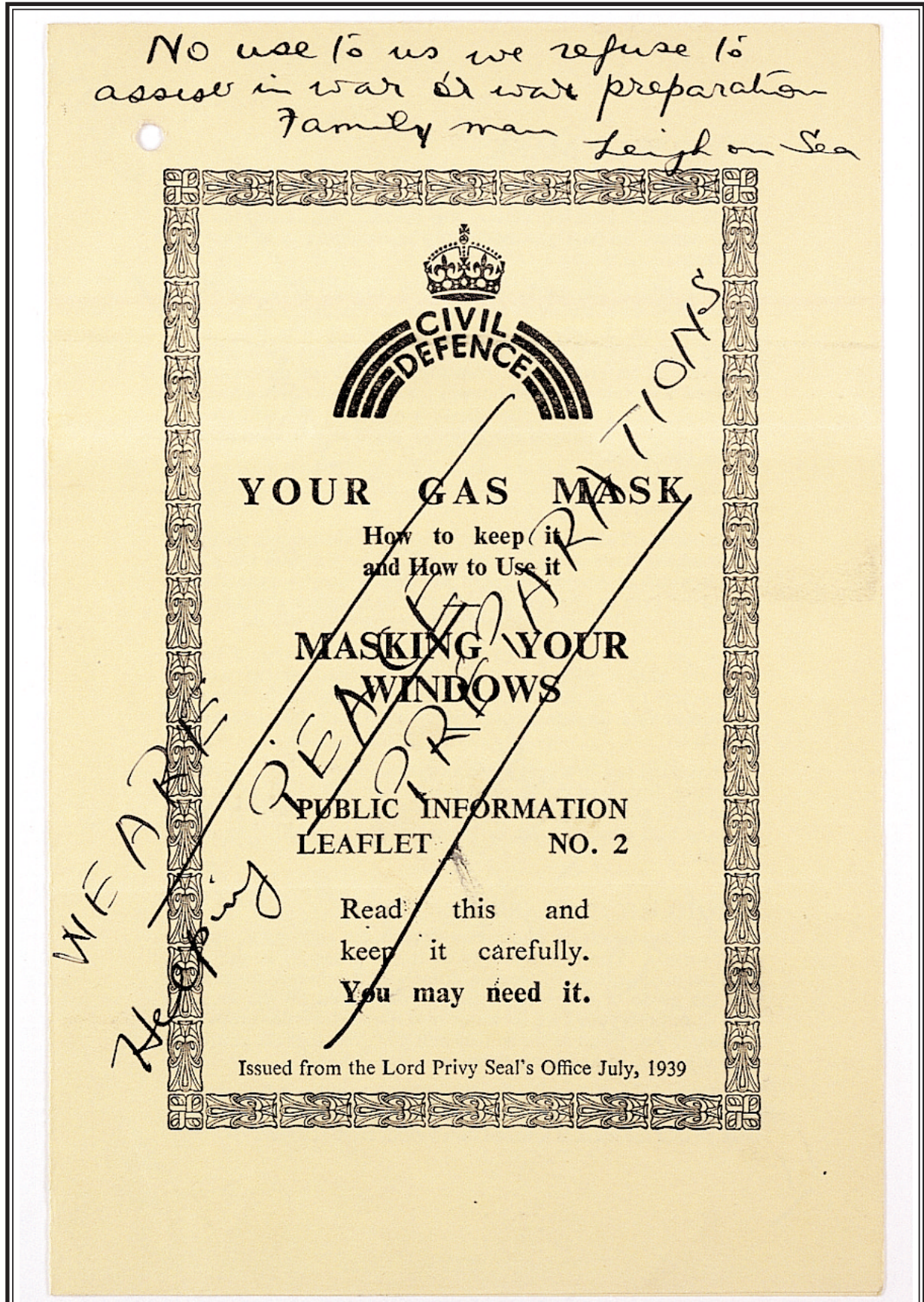
*Notes for a debate in the House of Commons on Blackout accidents.
January 1940.*



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Source 3



Leaflets returned to the Government by people protesting about the Blackout.



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Source 3 (pg2)

NEVER TRY TO LIFT THE MASK OFF UPWARDS OR BY PULLING THE CONTAINER OR THE EDGE OF THE RUBBER AT THE CHIN.

To prevent the window from misting over when the mask is worn, wet the end of a finger and rub it on a piece of toilet soap. Then rub the finger all over the inside of the window so as to leave a thin film of soap.

PUTTING YOUR MASK AWAY

After the mask has been used you will find that it is wet on the inside with moisture from the breath. This should be wiped off with a soft dry cloth and the mask allowed to dry before it is put away in its box. Do not try to dry it by applying heat.

The contents of the container do not deteriorate either with age or with wearing the mask when gas is not present. But if you suspect any flaw in your gas mask you should inform your local air raid warden.

It is a good thing to get out your gas mask occasionally and put it on, so as to get used to wearing it, and if you take the simple precautions set out above you will ensure that it is always ready for your protection.

MASKING YOUR WINDOWS

In war, one of our great protections against the dangers of air attack after nightfall would be the "black-out." On the outbreak of hostilities all external lights and street lighting would be totally extinguished so as to give hostile aircraft no indication as to their whereabouts. But this will not be fully effective unless you do your part, and see to it that no lighting in the house where you live is visible from the outside. The motto for safety will be "Keep it dark!"

Every occupier of rooms, house or flat would be responsible for darkening his own lights. Lights in the halls or on the staircases of blocks of flats or dwellings would be the responsibility of the landlord or owner.

Of course, the most convenient way of shutting in the light is to use close fitting blinds. These can be of any thick, dark coloured material such as dark blue or black or dark green glazed Holland, Lancaster or Italian Cloth.

If you cannot manage this, you could obscure your windows by fixing up sheets of black paper or thick dark brown paper mounted on battens.

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Source 4

GERMANY.

Generally speaking the black-out in German towns is more severe than in London. Only guide lights at street intersections which are carefully screened and lights, also screened, to mark obstructions are allowed. No shop window lighting is permitted.

It was reported in May that some street lighting was permitted in towns in Bohemia and Polish Upper Silesia, until an air raid warning was sounded. This was probably due to fear of subversive activities being carried on by Poles and Czechs in the black-out, as well as to the belief that these remoter territories were safe from air attack.

The general standard of black-out as regards private houses was enforced much more strictly during exercises

CONCLUSION.

With the exception of France, where the view was taken that no concealment measures could prevent German pilots finding the larger cities, and elaborate preparations had been made in peace-time to enable street lighting to be cut off from a central point by means of relays without interfering with house lighting, the restriction of street and shop lighting in European countries is, in the main, rather more severe than in the United Kingdom. The German system of a permanent black-out from dusk to dawn is believed to have been strictly enforced in the countries now occupied by them, except in certain parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia where there are special reasons for a modification of this policy.

Secret War Cabinet document on the Blackout in the rest of western Europe.