



Safety Reminder & Boat Winterization

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I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone about winter safety concerns for ourselves and our boats. Fall and winter storms can put extra strains on our equipment and dock lines, and the possibility of snow and ice can add weight topside which can cause the collapse of Bimini tops and tarps. Constant attention is required to ensure that unnecessary damage is prevented.

Even more important is our personal safety. Docks and boat decks can become extremely slippery during the winter months, and ending up in the water is the last place a person wants to be! When the weather is bad, I encourage you to check with the Marina office staff before inspecting your boat, and whenever possible to please carry out these checks in pairs. Please be sure to identify the nearest escape ladder so that if something happens, you can limit your time in the water.

Below are some tips for winterizing your boat:

Inboard Engines

Run the engine to warm it up, and change the oil while it is warm to remove impurities. Changing the oil filters at this time is also a good idea. Flush the engine with fresh water and circulate antifreeze through the manifold by using a pickup hose from the water pump to a bucket of antifreeze. Start the engine and allow the antifreeze to circulate until water starts to exit the exhaust. This process will vary slightly depending on whether you have a "Raw Water" cooling system or an "Enclosed Fresh Water" cooling system. While you're in the engine compartment, you should also change the fluid in your transmission. Remove spark plugs and use fogging oil to spray into each cylinder. Wipe down the engine with a shop towel sprayed with a little fogging oil or WD-40.

Stern Drives

Thoroughly inspect the stern drive and remove any plant life or barnacles from the lower unit. Drain the gear case and check for excessive moisture in the oil, which could indicate leaking seals that should be repaired. Clean the lower unit with soap and water. If your stern drive has a rubber boot, check it for cracks or pinholes. Grease all fittings and check fluid levels in hydraulic steering or lift pumps. Check with your owner's manual for additional recommendations by the manufacturer.

Outboard Engines

Flush the engine with fresh water using flush muffs or similar device attached to the raw water pickup. Let all water drain from the engine. Wash engine down with soap and water and rinse thoroughly. Disconnect the fuel hose and the run engine until it stops, and make sure that all fuel is drained from the carburetor to prevent build-up of deposits from evaporated fuel. Use fogging oil in the cylinders to lubricate the cylinder walls and pistons. Apply water resistant grease to propeller shaft and threads. Change the gear oil in the lower unit. Lightly lubricate the exterior of the engine or polish with a good wax.

Fuel

Fill the fuel tank to avoid a build up of condensation over the winter months, and add a fuel stabilizer by following the instructions on the product. Change all fuel filters and water separators.

Bilges

Make sure the bilges are clean and dry. Use soap, hot water and a stiff brush to clean up any oil spills. Once the bilges are clean, spray with a moisture displacing lubricant and add a little antifreeze to prevent any water from freezing.

Fresh Water Systems

Completely drain the fresh water tank and hot water heater. Isolate the hot water heater by disconnecting the in and out lines from the water supply, and then connect the in and out lines together. Pump a non-toxic antifreeze into the system and turn on all the faucets including the shower and any wash-down areas until you see the antifreeze coming out. Also add non-toxic antifreeze to the water heater.

Head

Pump out the holding tank at an approved facility. While pumping, add fresh water to the bowl and flush several times. Use a sanitizer recommended by your owner's manual, and let sit for a few minutes. Add more fresh water and pump it out again. Add antifreeze and pump through hoses, holding tank, y-valve, macerator and discharge hose. Again, check your owner's manual to make sure that an alcohol-based antifreeze won't damage your system.

Interior

Remove any valuables, electronics, lines, PFDs, flares, fenders, etc. Over the winter, these items can be cleaned, checked and replaced as necessary. Open all drawers and lockers and clean thoroughly. Turn the cushions up on edge so that air is able to circulate around them, or better yet, bring them home to a climate controlled area. Open and clean the refrigerator and freezer. To keep your boat dry and mildew-free, you might want to install a dehumidifier or use some of the commercially available odor and moisture absorber products.

Out of Water Storage

Pressure wash hull, clean barnacles off props, shafts, rudders, struts, and trim tabs. Clean all thru-hulls and strainers. Open all seacocks to allow any water to drain out. Check the hull for blisters; if you find any that should be attended to, you might want to open them to drain over the winter. While you're at it, why not give the hull a good wax job? It is probably best to remove the batteries from the boat, and put them on a trickle charger, or charge them every 30-60 days, at home.

In-Water Storage

Close all seacocks and check rudder shafts and stuffing boxes for leaks; tighten or repack as necessary. Check your battery to make sure it is fully charged, clean terminals, add water if necessary, and make sure your charging system is working. Check bilge pumps to ensure they are working, and that float switches properly activate the pumps and are not hindered by debris. Make sure to check your boat periodically throughout the winter.

By following some of the above suggestions, you should be in good shape for the winter. However, do not neglect to consult your owner's manuals for manufacturer's recommendations on winterizing your boat and other systems. If you have not done a winterization job before or don't have an experienced friend to rely on, seek out a professional to do the job for you.

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