

Preparing for launch day? We are too, so here's a checklist that we, as fellow boaters, find helpful in making the process more efficient and thorough.

THE BASICS FOR ALL BOAT TYPES

Bottom paint—Do your research. There are many varieties based on use.

Battery—Top off (if applicable) with distilled water. Clean terminals and connectors with wire brush or sandpaper. Fully charge battery.

Lights—Check that all work. Carry extra bulbs, fuses. Consider upgrading to LED bulbs.

Life jackets—Are they still in good order? Do you have one for each guest as required by the Coast Guard? Check condition of your required throwable PFD.

- * Consider upgrading to inflatable jackets (for ages 16 and older) for greater comfort and to increase likelihood of use.
- * Inflate the bladder on every inflatable using the manual inflation tube to assure the bladder will hold air.
- * Check expiration date of automatic inflation mechanisms or components. Be sure each inflatable jacket has a charged cylinder, and carry extras. Assure "bobbin" or "aspirin" tablet is replaced every 2 years. Consider carrying extra "bobbins" or "aspirins."

Fire extinguishers—Check for expiration date (when applicable)—replace if expired

- * Make sure powder in dry chemical extinguishers will move freely when they are turned upside down. If the powder doesn't move, service or replace
- * Make sure approved mounting bracket are securely attached to vessel
- * **Note: Kidde recalled more than 40 million extinguishers in November 2017 because of bad plastic handles. Click here for recall information: <https://tinyurl.com/yd42pkpa>**

First Aid Kit—All boaters should carry a first aid kit. Check to see what needs to be restocked or added, including OTC medications / products such as sunburn treatment, hydrogen peroxide, witch hazel, analgesics, etc.

Flares—Check flares for expiration dates. Replace, if expired, with conventional flares or approved battery-operated devices.

Sound signal devices—Some type of sound-producing device (horn, bell, whistle) is required for safety and navigation. Check state regulations for requirements relative to vessel size. Verify devices function properly.

Required Safety Items—Click here for more on required safety items: "*Boaters Guide to the Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats*" <https://www.uscgboating.org/images/420.PDF>

Bilge pump—Best to test while on land. Check connectors, float switch, hose, hose clamps.

Fuel Tank—Inspect fuel tank connections, hoses

Fluids—Check power steering, trim/tilt levels, other hydraulic devices

Fuel—Change filter and/or water separator.

Anchor—Time to replace the anchor line or shackles, chain?

Thru-hull fittings and hoses—Check for cracking and breaks. Verify fittings are still secure and free of obstructions.

Hoses—Check for bad hoses. Are they brittle, developing weak spots? Check hose clamps for corrosion and failure. Hoses below the waterline should be double-clamped with stainless steel clamps. **Make a note now to check thru-hulls immediately after launch.**

In-line strainers—Verify all strainers are clean, free of debris and clogs, properly reassembled, free of corrosion and securely mounted.

Engine intake sea strainer(s)—Check for debris or clogs, properly reassembled, free of corrosion and securely mounted.

Anodes—Check for deterioration. They should be replaced at least every two years regardless of how they look.

Prop—Check hardware and that prop is firmly on shaft. Any wiggle is a bad sign and points to the need for bearing work.

Seacocks—Check frequently to make sure they're in good working order. Check for proper lubrication, signs of leakage, corrosion. Don't skimp when replacing—marine-grade ball valves are the only type to use.

Control cables—Inspect for proper lubrication, function, corrosion.

Registration—Did you renew it?

Stern plug—Did you leave it in last fall? If not, do you know where it is? Put it in sooner rather than later.

Hull maintenance—Need to replenish cleaners, wax, buffing pads, quality rags?

INBOARDS AND INBOARD / OUTBOARDS

Stuffing box—Look for signs of leakage. Check packing gland and packing nuts if necessary.

Rudderstock—Be sure it wasn't damaged last season. Check for hardware corrosion. Check packing gland and packing nuts if necessary.

Outdrive bellows—Inspect for cracks.

Galley—Check all plumbing fixtures and connections, stove, propane tanks, hoses.

Head—Replenish disinfectant additives

Hatches—Take a hose to the topsides to check that all hatch gaskets are in good condition and leakproof.

Bilge blower—Inspect hose for leaks.

FOR SAILORS

Hardware—Inspect all fittings, deck hardware and lifeline stations and bases for corrosion and stress cracks.

Chainplates—Check above and below deck for stress cracks, corrosion, proper attachment and sealed against water incursion.

Stays—Check standing and running rigging and other cables and lines for wear and weak points.

Other—Refer to list above for inboards

TRAILERING

Frame—Look for rust everywhere. Trailer should be rinsed with fresh water after each salt water submersion.

Winch—Check hardware, lubricate gears; check line / cable / strap for weak spots.

Wheel bearings—Pull wheels off and inspect bearings. If they need to be repacked—which will require cleaning first—use a synthetic, marine-grade grease.

Tires—Check for cracks or dry rot. Inflate as needed. Inspect the spare.

Brakes—Inspect and check fluid, lights, blinkers

Tips—

- * It can be helpful to drive your trailer onto wide boards in the fall so the tires aren't sitting in mud come spring.
- * Lubricate ball receiver mechanism

DOCKSIDE

Shore power—Inspect cable connections for damage. Burn marks can indicate the cable and / or boat's shore power inlet or the dock's receptacle must be replaced.

- * Test ground-fault protection on your boat and private dock, and know how to prevent Electric Shock Drowning.

Bumper materials—Does the dock bumper or edging need to be repaired or replaced?