



Hurricane preparation

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Timely advice...

Sea Tow Offers Preparedness Tips for Boaters

As Peak Hurricane Season Approaches

The first six weeks of this year's hurricane season have passed without a serious threat. But the National Hurricane Center's 2011 prediction of 12 to 18 named storms—including three to six major hurricanes—is in the back of everyone's mind. For that reason, Sea Tow, a leading marine assistance provider, advises boaters in coastal and inland areas where hurricanes and tropical storms are a threat to be prepared.

First, review your insurance policy – with your provider, if possible. Boat owners whose marine insurance requires them to relocate their vessels out of a hurricane zone should do so by the date specified in their policy. But for those who plan to not relocate their boats, it's important to have a Storm Plan ready to execute as soon as the forecast spells danger.

In fact, most insurance providers require a formal written Storm Plan detailing where and how your boat must be secured during a hurricane. Make sure your insurance policy is current and in force, and that you know what actions it requires you to take in the event of a storm. If you live out of the area during the summer months, designate a responsible person to execute the Storm Plan in your absence.

It's also important to check the lease or dockage agreement with your marina, storage facility or private dock owner where your boat is moored to be sure the vessel can remain there during a hurricane. If it can stay, be sure you know the procedure for securing not only your vessel, but those docked around it, as well. A boat that breaks loose in a hurricane can wreak havoc on neighboring vessels.

Some facilities demand that boats be removed from the water when a major storm is forecast. Owners who must move their boats should decide where to have it hauled before the hurricane season begins. Don't wait until a storm is imminent. Charges for storm haul-outs may be covered by your insurance policy.

Also, check with your local Sea Tow franchise to see what pre-storm haul-out services are offered.

10 Additional Boaters' Tips for Hurricane Preparedness

1. Closely monitor local and national weather services including NOAA Weather Radio.
2. Store all the boat's important documents, including your marine insurance policy, in a secure place off the vessel.
3. Deflate your dinghy and store it and its outboard off the boat. If it's a fiberglass dinghy, have it stored in an indoor facility.
4. If your boat is in a facility with shore power, be sure all power is turned off and all shore power cords are stowed securely. Disconnect your boat's battery.
5. Anchored boats should ensure enough scope. Inspect all anchor rode and chain and use only good or new gear. Set extra anchors as necessary.
6. Make an inventory, preferably by video, of all valuable fixed items such as marine electronics on board your boat.
6. When a storm is forecast for your area, remove all detachable items from your boat, such as canvas, sails, cushions, fishing rigging, radios and antennas. Lash down everything that you cannot remove, including booms, tillers, wheels, etc.
7. If your boat is on a trailer, lash it securely. Use tie-downs to anchor the trailer to the ground, let the air out of its tires and weigh down the frame.
8. Boats docked in a marina or in a private berth should be centered in the slip. Double-up all dock lines and make sure they are of sufficient length to compensate for excessive high water.
10. Do not stay with your boat or try to ride out a storm on board. No matter how valuable your vessel is to you—both financially and sentimentally—it's not worth your life.

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