

# Preparing Your Boat for Hurricane Season

Sustainable Living

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**The summer is** a great time for boating. However, with summer comes hurricane season. Just as we protect our homes, we must also consider our boats. The key to protecting your boat and yourself during a storm event is *preparation* and *planning*. It is best to develop your plan before June 1st, the start of hurricane season.

## **Developing a Plan**

When constructing your plan, one of the most important items is deciding where to secure your boat. Securing your vessel inland is best. Other options include storing your boat on a trailer, dry storage facilities, or anchoring or mooring the boat in the water. If you leave your boat in the water, identify secure mooring locations and obtain permission from the appropriate person if needed. If you leave your boat at a marina, be sure that you understand your marina's boat storage agreement.

## **Equipment and Supplies**

Check that your boat and equipment are in proper working order before the start of each hurricane season. Create a checklist of the equipment and supplies you will need to properly secure your boat such as excess rope and lines, chafing gear, anchors and/or fenders, of the appropriate weight and size of your vessel. Ensure that you have a fully charged battery and full fuel tank. If possible, have your holding tanks pumped at the earliest notification of hurricane conditions.

## **Paperwork**

Keep copies of important documents such as your hurricane plan, current insurance policies, boat registration, title, and lease agreements with marinas or storage areas.



Like our homes, we must also protect our boats during hurricane season.

Copies of paperwork should be in your possession, in watertight storage on the vessel, and possibly in remote electronic storage. Be sure to take pre-hurricane pictures of the condition of your boat.

## **Practice Your Plan**

On a fair weather day, take the time to practice your plan. Pay attention to prep time and be sure to include other factors, such as drawbridges not working and other boaters also enacting their plans. Make note if there is any additional equipment you may need to purchase.

## **Track the Storm**

When you have news of a storm, use all media outlets available to track the storm. You should enact your plan no less than 48 to 72 hours before the predicted landfall.

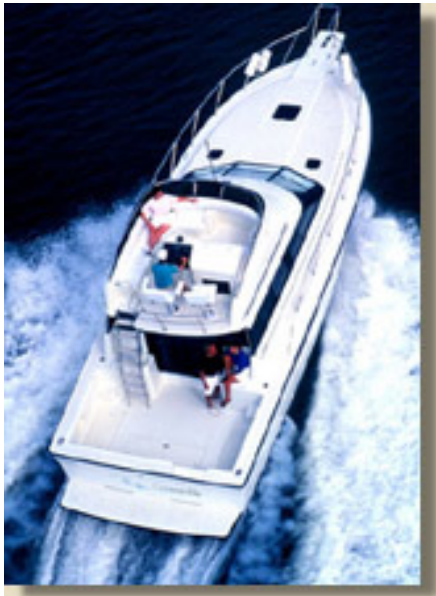
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## Securing Your Boat

If you leave your boat in the water, double and triple secure all lines from several directions to account for the erratic nature of hurricane winds. Remove all electronics, canvas, sails, dinghies, cushions, and/or biminis. Remove potential sources of pollution such as portable fuel containers, paint cans, sanitation devices, or cleaners that could get into the water and harm the environment. Lash down all items that cannot be removed.



Your vessel's environmental impacts when it is not in use. Remove all that you can and secure what you cannot.

## Trailing Your Boat

Make sure your trailer is in proper working condition before removing your boat. Securely lash your boat to its trailer. Place blocks between the frame and axle inside each wheel to prevent damage to the suspension from rain accumulating in the boat during the storm. Owners of smaller light-weight boats should partially fill their boats with water or leave in the drain plug to make their boats heavier. Partially deflate trailer tires to accommodate the added weight of the water.

## Other Considerations

Recruit a friend to assist you in securing your boat in the event that you are out of town. If your vessel is damaged during the storm, make sure you take plenty of pictures to document the damage. After each storm, take notice of procedures that may need to be adjusted in your plan.

## Safety First!

*Remember, your life is more valuable than that of your property!* Do not stay on your vessel during a hurricane or attempt to outrun the storm. Stay tuned to all official bulletins until the storm has passed. Return to your vessel only when local authorities have indicated it is safe for you to return.

## For More Information

**Pinellas County Emergency Management** (727) 464-3800

## **Boat U.S. Hurricane Center Webpage**

<http://www.boatus.com/hurricanes/brochure.asp>

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