**Preparing your Boat for a Hurricane**

**Precautions for Boat Owners**

The key to protecting your boat from hurricanes or any severe weather is planning, preparation, and timely action. The following precautions and checklists are meant as guidelines only.

Each boat owner needs a plan unique to the type of boat, the local boating environment, the severe weather conditions likely to occur and the characteristics of safe havens and/or plans for protection. Listen to your local Emergency Management office for specific evacuations related to boats.

**Do Not Stay Aboard. Winds during any hurricane can exceed 100 mph, and tornados are often associated with these storms. First and foremost, protect human life**.

* Prior to the hurricane season, develop a detailed plan of action to secure your vessel in the marina. If permitted, remove your boat from the threatened area, or take your boat to a previously identified hurricane refuge. Before hurricane season, practice your plan to ensure it works.
* Arrange for a friend to carry out your plans if you are out of town during hurricane season.
* Check your lease or storage rental agreement with the marina or storage area. Know your responsibilities and liabilities as well as those of the marina.
* Consolidate all records, including insurance policies, a recent photo of your vessel, boat lease agreement with the marina or storage area, and telephone numbers of appropriate authorities – harbor master, Coast Guard and insurance agent­ – and keep them in your possession.
* Maintain an inventory of both the items removed and those left on board. Items of value should be marked so that they can be readily identified, if dispersed by the storm.
* When a hurricane is approaching, and after you have made anchoring or mooring provisions, remove all moveable equipment such as canvas, sails, dinghies, radios, cushions, Biminis and roller furling sails. Lash down everything you cannot remove such as tillers, wheels, booms, etc. Make sure the electrical system is cut off unless you plan to leave the boat in the water and remove the battery to eliminate the risk of fire or other damage.

**Trailerable Boats**

* Be sure your tow vehicle is capable of properly and adequately moving the boat. Check your trailer: tires, bearings and axle should all be in good condition.
* Once at a “safe” place, lash your boat to the trailer and place blocks between the frame members and the axle inside each wheel. Owners of lightweight boats, after consulting with the manufacturer, may wish to consider letting about half the air out of the tires, then filling the boat one-third full of water to help hold it down. (The blocks will prevent damage to the springs from the additional weight of the water.)
* Secure your boat with heavy lines to fixed objects. Try to pick a location that allows you to secure it from all four directions, because hurricane winds rotate and change direction. It can be tied down to screw anchors secured into the ground. Remember that trees are often blown over during a hurricane.

**Non-Trailerable Boats in Dry Storage**

When selecting a “safe” location, be sure to consider whether storm surge could rise into the area. Never leave a boat on davits or on a hydro-lift.

**Non-Trailerable Boats in Wet Storage**

The owner of a large boat, usually one moored in a berth, has three options:

* Secure the boat in the marina berth.
* Moor the boat in a previously identified safe area.
* Haul the boat

Each action requires a separate strategy. Running from the storm, is not encouraged except for large commercial vessels unless there is enough time to get your boat beyond the storm’s projected path.

**Boats Remaining in Marina Berth**

* Double all lines. Rig crossing spring lines fore and aft. Attach lines high on pilings to allow for tidal rise or surge. Make sure lines will not slip off pilings. Inspect pilings and choose those that seem strongest and tallest and are properly installed. The longer the dock lines, the better a boat will be at coping with high tides. It is also essential to double up on all lines and use chafe protectors at any potential chafe points.
* Install fenders to protect the boat from rubbing against the pier, pilings and other boats. Cover all lines at rough points to prevent chafing. Wrap with tape, rags, and rubber hoses, etc.
* Assess the attachment of primary cleats, winches and chocks. These should have substantial back plates and adequate stainless steel bolt sizes.
* Batteries should be fully charged and checked to ensure their capability to run automatic bilge pumps for the duration of the storm. Consider backup batteries. Cut off all devices consuming electricity except bilge pumps.