



## Are You and Your Boat Ready for Hurricane Season?



Hurricane season officially begins June 1<sup>st</sup>, but a smart boat owner knows to be prepared well-before this time. The key to protecting your boat and yourself during a hurricane is *planning and preparation*.

***It is unwise and even dangerous to wait to the last minute to make arrangements to secure your boat.***

### **DEVELOP A PLAN**

- Develop a plan of how you will secure your boat *before* hurricane season.
- If possible, plan to remove your boat from the targeted area to a previously identified hurricane refuge.
- If you will have to leave your boat in the water, identify secure mooring locations and obtain permission from the appropriate persons if needed.
- Contact marinas or storage areas for their hurricane plan/ procedures as well as your responsibilities and liabilities while your vessel is at their facilities.
- Make arrangements for someone who is knowledgeable of your plan to care for your boat if you won't be home during the hurricane season.

*Remember, there are insufficient storage areas for every boat in the county.  
Boaters, who act early, will fare the best.*

### **PRACTICE YOUR PLAN**

- Practice implementing your plan to determine how much time and work it takes.
- Check surrounding conditions where you want to secure your boat such as accessibility, water depth, bridge locations, locating aids, obstructions to navigation and objects to secure lines to or drop anchors.

### **IMPORTANT PAPERS/ INFORMATION**

- Make copies of important documents such as insurance policies, boat registration, lease agreements with marinas or storage areas and telephone numbers of appropriate agencies such as the coast guard or insurance agent.
- Take pre-hurricane pictures of your boat for insurance purposes and make sure your insurance policy is current.

### **EQUIPMENT/ SUPPLIES**

- Check that your boat is in sound condition and proper working order before the start of hurricane season.
- Create a checklist of equipment and supplies you will need to properly secure your boat such as excess rope and lines, chafing gear, anchors and/or fenders.
- Make sure your boat batteries are charged.
- Ensure the bilge pump is proper working order.
- Keep your fuel tank full.
- If possible, have your holding tanks pumped at the earliest notification of hurricane conditions.

## **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; cover all contact points with rags, tape, or hoses to prevent chafing.
- Remove any portable equipment such as radios and other 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.
- Latch down all items that cannot be removed.
- Seal all openings using duct tape to ensure your boat remains watertight.



## **TRAILERING 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 lightweight 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.

## **SAFETY FIRST!**

*Remember, your safety should be a priority over the value of a boat!!*

- Do not stay on your vessel during a hurricane or attempt to outrun the storm.
- Stay tuned in to all broadcasts and official bulletins until the storm has passed.
- After the hurricane, return to your vessel only when local authorities have cleared your area and say it is OK to return.
- Once cleared, check your boat for damage and equipment and be aware of potential hazards left in the waterway from the storm.

### **For More Information:**

**Lee County Bureau of Emergency Management:** (239) 477-3600

**Boat U.S. Hurricane Center Webpage:** <http://www.boatus.com/hurricanes/brochure.asp>

Joy Hazell  
Sea Grant Agent  
2007

Lee County/University of Florida Extension  
3406 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers  
Florida 33916 (239) 461-7518  
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu>