

TO GO OR NOT TO GO, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Coming from the aviation industry, I have been witness to a condition among pilots called "gottogethereitis." This is an interesting condition because once it is caught, there is very little that can be done to counter its effects.

Boating, like aviation, has its own version of "gottogethereitis." Many recreational boat captains convince themselves that they can make a trip even though they may not have the knowledge or skills to take on the journey.

As Clint Eastwood once said, "A man has got to know his limitations."

Whether you are the Captain of an aircraft or the Captain of a boat, the Go / No Go criteria are the same.

- 1) Do I fully understand all of the systems in my vessel?
- 2) Are all of my vessels' systems working correctly?
 - a. If not, do I understand the ramifications of the equipment that is not working correctly?
 - b. Am I capable of safely operating the vessel without this equipment?
- 3) What is the current and forecast weather along my route?
 - a. Have I operated a similar size vessel in this type of weather?
 - b. Do I have any apprehensions about operating this vessel in this type of weather?
- 4) What will the weather be at my destination when I arrive?
 - a. Am I, and my crew, capable of docking, mooring, or anchoring safely in this type of weather?
- 5) Do I have current printed charts for this trip?
 - a. If not, what is my backup in case my electronics fail?
 - b. Do I know how to use the printed charts?
 - c. Do I have the tools necessary to navigate with printed charts?
- 6) Have I planned the route accounting for all potential obstacles and hazards?
- 7) How much is the lowest fuel level that I am comfortable reaching before refueling?
- 8) Is all of my vessel's safety equipment accounted for and operable?
- 9) Do I have adequate contingency plans for:
 - a. Weather
 - b. Mechanical issues
 - c. Illness

- d. Low fuel conditions
- e. Fatigue

These represent common criteria. You will want to add or modify the list based on your experience level and boating conditions.

Once you have evaluated all of these criteria, you are then in a position to determine if you are going to "go" or "not go." Only you can make that decision.

When deciding you also need to take into account your gut feeling. Any apprehension should be addressed before deciding.

Sometimes your decision will be to hold off and go another day. Other times the decision will be to find someone to go with you to show you the way. And, as your experience increases, many times you will feel comfortable going on your own.

The point is, you must have the self-discipline and restraint to make the decision to not go if things don't feel right. You are always better off waiting and arriving safely than going and ending up in a situation that you are not prepared to handle.