

Winter Wisdom: Helpful Preparation Tips for Winter Lay-up Afloat

BY JOHN STRONG

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Do you keep your boat where the winters aren't too fierce but still cold enough to put an end to the boating season? If your boat is in the water all year, don't ignore it all winter. ACE is pleased to offer important tips to help you prepare your boat for the winter season, and help prevent potential weather-related problems.

Make regular inspection visits to your vessel to ensure the bilges are dry, drains are clear, mooring lines are secure and not chafing, and batteries are charged.

Accumulating leaves, ice or snow can block cockpit drains, and the weight of snow or rainwater collecting in the cockpit can force the stern down, allowing water to enter through openings normally above the waterline. Inspect all through-hulls close to the waterline. If any of them are plastic, they can develop cracks that will allow water in if

they become submerged. They can be replaced with bronze or fiber-reinforced nylon.

Make certain bilge pumps and float switches are in good condition, and keep the batteries charged. Remember that pumps don't sink boats, leaks sink boats. Inspect all your hoses, valves, outdrive bellows, stuffing boxes, strainers and through-hulls and be sure everything is ship-shape.

Close all the seacocks. If they are left open and a short period of freezing weather causes a hose to split or a strainer to crack, the boat will sink when the weather warms up. Be sure to inspect all the plumbing when opening the seacocks in the spring.

Spend time preparing your boat for colder weather and make regular visits throughout the winter. A bit of prevention and attention now may prevent many headaches later! ❖



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