



# SHIP SHAPE FOR SUMMER

Are you ready for boating this summer? Nikkulas takes a look at some easy ways to get your boat in ship shape for the summer.

Summer is just around the corner and as the weather starts to heat up so does the boat activity. This month is a good time for boat owners to check out the boat and make sure it's in ship shape condition and ready for the summer. Even if your boat is not the latest and greatest and has been neglected over the years there are small steps you can take to bring it back to life for your enjoyment.

Putting the time and effort in to maintain the cosmetic appearance and seaworthiness will not only ensure that you have safe and trouble free boating all year but also it can increase the market value when it comes to selling.

## INSPECTION

Before you madly rush into the job, take your time to visually inspect the hull for cracks, corrosion, blistering also making sure sea cocks on through hull fittings are working and don't forget the anodes. This must be done when the hull is out of the water either on a trailer or handstand.

If your fiberglass boat is permanently on a mooring or in a pen then try to leave it on the handstand as long as practically possible as it gives the hull a chance to dry out preventing osmosis in the long term (3 weeks min). Check all your equipment, lights, bilge pumps, batteries, radios, anchor including safety gear to make sure it is all in operational use. Write down your observations and everything that is damaged missing or not working properly. Think back to the small problems you didn't fix thought the year and make notes on them as well.

Taking the time out now and organising all the work to be done will reduce the chance of things going wrong out on the water later. If you find some things on your list have not been completed then there is only one simple rule 'don't go boating till it is done.' Once the list is complete and you are happy you can then start to look at ways to make your boat look good as well.

## COSMETIC APPEARANCE



THIS PICTURE: Having an inspection of the boat is the first step in preparation to get the boat in working order.



THIS PICTURE: Using a boat cover is a great way to keep the hull free from leaves and also helps to maintain the cosmetic appearance. BELOW: An EPIRB gives you the best chance of being found in a serious emergency.

In order to maintain the cosmetic look of a boat it should be washed down with detergent, acid washed with Ranex or hull cleaner then polished and waxed once a year. Drop into your local BCF store for advice on what products will best suit your boats hull and condition as there are many different cutting compounds and waxes are available.

### HANDY HINTS

- Apply acid /hull wash with a paint brush and bucket on all exterior parts of your boat (except rubber window seals) including stainless steel working from the bottom to the top one section of the boat at a time. Always wash the acid off with freshwater after 5-10 min. And trust me you need gloves for this stuff and don't get it in your eyes.
- When polishing/waxing work on the shaded side of the hull and if you use an electric buffer, quality polishing pads are a must. The old wax on wax off by hand does work but use two bits of cheesecloth one for the wax on and another bit for the wax off.

### OUTBOARD MOTORS AND MECHANICAL MAINTENANCE

You basically have two options here. Service your own engine or get a professional to perform the yearly service. This is essential because the last thing you want is motor problems when you're out in the middle of the ocean. It is also good to get quotes and opinions from a couple of mechanics to get you the best deal, price and advice.

All your filters should be replaced at least once a year. This includes primary and secondary fuel filters as well as oil filters if fitted. Air filters are also on most modern outboards



these days as well as conventional petrol/diesel, inboards so make sure they get changed. If you find water in the fuel or blockages having a secondary filter fitted to the fuel line with water separator attachment can make a huge difference. After the fuel lines and filters the next thing to check is the battery.

Battery failure is embarrassing at best and worst can have the potential to put your life at risk. Regular use of your battery will maintain its starting ability. But if you

haven't used it in months then it's likely it will be flat or run flat very quickly.

A seaworthy battery is one that is the correct size, type, and holds enough cranking power to start your engine and has the ability to store charging current.

Remove the battery and take it to be load tested to see how much life it has left or if you need another. When replacing the battery make sure you consult engine manufacture for correct battery type and size. Choosing the right one may be expensive but believe me it's a small price to pay if you have to constantly replace cheaper ones. If you find you have a battery that needs replacing and you have more than one battery you must replace all the batteries in the system. When maintained correctly by checking the distilled water level, regular charging and clean and tight terminal connections they are seaworthy.

## TRAILERS

The transport of your boat is also just as important as keeping your boat maintained so keeping your trailer fully functional is another aspect to look at. Make sure it's registered and all the lights work is my advice as the fine can be more than the cost of paying registration and replacing faulty bulbs.

The trailer bearings have to be up to scratch and grease kept up to the over-ride brake coupling. If you put up with a bad trailer last season have a serious think about getting a whole new trailer system if you use your boat a lot. Trailing your boat to and from the water takes the edge off the boating experience if your constantly worrying about your lights, bearings and boat bouncing around on every bump because your springs are fused together with rust. The price to replace all the rusted and worn bits could be the same as a new trailer. The setup of rollers is the biggest factor for making your launch and retrieve a success. Basically your side rollers need adjusting lower /higher so the majority of the weight is on the keel rollers, this makes all the difference.

## OTHER TRAILER TIPS

**Have** a spare tyre for your trailer and jack that can lift the weight of boat.

**Don't** leave the hand break on for long periods of time as calipers can lock to break pads. (chocking wheels is better)

**Bearing Buddies work** but still need grease every second trip -any excess grease on roller spindles ends up covering bottom of hull.

**Make sure** winch wire or strap is in perfect condition and is long enough to allow you to hook it to the front of boat while it's still tied to jetty.



## SAFETY EQUIPMENT

As a skipper you are responsible for having the correct safety equipment for your area of operation. It's your responsibility to maintain the condition of the equipment and it should always be stowed where it is easily reached. When a person comes out with you for the first time you must show them where all the equipment is and how to use it. If you are the passenger on a vessel for the first time if you are not shown ask the skipper to show you before you depart. If they can't do this then I would reconsider my decision to go boating.

The items that a safe skipper should have and you must check in your pre season preparation include:

**BILGE PUMP** that has automatic float switch that will operate even if batteries are turned off.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHER** showing the needle in the green on the gauge in the case of dry chemical type that serves as a good all rounder.

**ANCHOR WITH CHAIN** that is the length of the boat plus rope that is at least three times the length of the deepest part of the ocean you're operating in. Make no mistake with this, as the anchor is the most important safety item you have and never cut an anchor off if it's snagged unless you have a spare.

**LIFE JACKETS:** one for each person and PFD type 1.

**FLARES:** minimum of 2 smoke flares, 2 hand held red flares and 2 parachute flares is more than enough to cover you.

**EPIRB:** remember to switch to the 406 by Feb 2009

**MARINE RADIO:** a 27 meg or VHF being my choice. You need a license to operate. It's relatively simple to get a license and this type of radio you can receive updated weather forecasts if you're within 20 nautical miles from Perth.



THIS PICTURE: A handstand or trailer allows for proper inspection of the hull.

To keep your vessel seaworthy and looking good you can do the work yourself with a little planning and hard work. There are professional boat maintenance companies that will take care of all your vessels needs at a price depending on your budget and size of boat. It is possible after several years of use (not abuse) to sell your boat close to its original purchase price unlike motor vehicles that depreciate in value every year. So keeping your vessel maintained can pay off in the end. **Email** [nikkulas@skippersschool.com.au](mailto:nikkulas@skippersschool.com.au) for any comments or questions.

## BOAT TIPS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Checking the gauge on fire extinguisher to make sure it is ready for any emergency; Make sure all safety gear is up to date and in good working order; It is very important to have a well maintained trailer; The setup of rollers is the biggest factor for making your launch and retrieve a success