



Heavy Weather Skippering

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As the temperatures continue to drop, we need to focus now on skippering in heavy weather - because it is coming. This column is about that.

Heavy Water

Why is heavy weather more dangerous as we move into the Fall? Well, putting hurricanes aside which are in their own class, heavy weather in the colder months has its own set of challenges. First, hypothermia is but a small slip away (see SSP, "Cold Water Survival, Hypothermia, Rescue & Recovery", 10/27/10.) Second, as the water chills, it gets denser per cubic foot. Denser means more "oomph" behind those chops. Third, it gets darker sooner. What used to be an all daylight trip out to a favorite fishing spot is now a return under the cover of night. Believe me, once one thing goes wrong, the chances of something else going wrong before you can focus on and fix the first problem just went up. Now you have a spiraling and accelerating danger curve on your hands. So, what to do if caught in heavy weather...?

1. Put Your Life Jackets On - Right away, the skipper has to direct everyone to don their life jackets. On my vessel, I have a heavy weather/type-1 life jacket on the back of my helm seat. Across the back, where the crew can read it, it says, "If you see the captain put this on, try to find one for yourself."



2. Take Waves at an angle - Those waves that you are trying to muscle through pack tremendous power within them. Did you know that 1 out of every 20 boats that sink at sea does so when the hull comes apart under the force of pounding seas? If that statistic was adjusted for heavy weather sinkings, it would go up dramatically, I'm sure. Cross the waves at a 45-degree angle and "tack" across the storm like a sailboat moving to windward. And slow down! Your 20 knots and 5 knots of wave speed multiply the force of the pounding. Slow down and divide the forces.

3. Don't Be Bashful - If things start to get dicey, get on the radio and call the USCG. Tell them where you are, where you are heading and why you are concerned about the situation. Most likely, the watch stander will take that infor-

mation and ask you to check in with him or her every 15 minutes. Don't be late in checking in or you may find a red-and-white helicopter hovering over you. But if you are in trouble, the USCG will know where you were just 15 minutes prior. You started the "rescue starts now" clock the last time you communicated your position.

4. Any Port in a Storm - OK, you told your wife you'd be back by 4pm and it is now 6pm and you are struggling against the nor'easter that is keeping you from operating at speed to get in. Don't bet your life on a perceived deadline. Your wife would rather you survive. Head to the nearest harbor you can safely make, even if that means turning and putting the storm on your stern. Arriving safely in New Jersey is better than not arriving at all.

5. Surf - If you find the sea is going

where you are, consider getting on the back of one of those growlers and staying there, all the way home. It takes considerable seamanship and helmsmanship to ride the back of a wave but consider this. If you have an outboard engine with a transom cut-out, your "free board" is only that little distance between the water line and the lowest part of that cut-out. Probably 6"-10". If you have a following sea and one of those growlers catches up with you, he will swamp you from astern. Stay ahead and he can't...

6. Create a Ditch Bag - If things really get dicey, don't leave the boat until it sinks out from under you. But have a "ditch bag" ready - cell phone, handheld radio, fresh water, dry clothes, medical kit, flash light, flares, etc come immediately to mind.

I spent five days at sea in Hurricane Alberta over 20 years ago. I have a healthy respect for the sea and how fast things can go from bad to absolutely awful. Don't be a statistic. Be the skipper who can say, "I always bring my crew back."

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2010@aol.com or go direct to John Blevins, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."



FISHING WITH TONY

by TONY SALERNO

STRIPERS FILL THE BOAT WITH A SPRINKLE OF TOGS

After nearly two weeks of constant heavy winds and rough seas, the ocean finally took a rest by flattening out this past Sunday allowing anglers to cruise to their favorite fish holes where plenty of stripers, blues and blackfish awaited. Actually, the bass and blue fishing have been off the charts for the past couple of weeks along the Fire Island National Seashore where larger fishing vessels that braved the elements of the sea conditions have been enjoying some of the best diamond jig fishing in recent history.

So with all the hype and the fact that my boat was pulled out of the water for the winter, I decided to join Captain James Russo and his crew of the Center Moriches based open boat the Rosie along with 34 other patrons for a day of sunshine and some striper and tog fishing.

With the golden horizon and not a trace of breeze to be found, I knew it was going to be a glorious day weather wise as the Rosie pull away from the dock at promptly 6 A.M. and headed for Moriches Inlet where we would steam 9-miles west of the inlet to the scene of the action. I recall thinking to myself that even if the fish were not to cooperate; it still is grand to be out here after two weeks of waiting for this day.

After a bit more than an hour, the roar of the boats diesel engines idle down to a purr of a kitten as Captain James set the boat in position so that all 35 fares would have fair shake at the fish. With diamond jigs as our arsenal and the toot of the horn signifying it was time to start fishing, it was almost instantaneous as our diamond jig breakfast were ravenously intercepted by insatiable bass and blues. In fact, our first drift resulted in an easy boat limit of two bass per angler as over a hundred bass came over the rails. However after the first 70 fish, everything was released to do battle on another day. We played catch and release with as many fish you cared to catch for the next three drifts and then it was off to blackfish country.

We fished togs for the remainder of the day where everyone put at least a keeper or two in their boxes to go with all those stripers. The highlight of the day was the sprit and enthusiasm of 12-year-old CJ Vanas of Sound Beach. Not only did CJ put away his share of striper on the day, he also showed the grown ups to shame as the young sharpie put three quality togs in the box. This fishing will not last much longer, get out there and have a blast.



CJ Vanas displays the catch of the day

Bay Gas Provides Propane Training to Mastic Fire Department

With the growing needs for continuing education, the Suffolk County volunteer firefighter goes through a great amount of training. Part of their certification is learning how to handle a gas emergency.

Bay Gas Service Propane Emergency Response Team (ERT), who also consists of firefighters, has become a large resource for the fire department, assisting them in all gas emergencies. Our training program teaches the basics of knowing the do's and don'ts in the gas industry (i.e. natural, propane).

Bay Gas Service has spent ten years of training fire departments on emergency response. Our time is your time, both serving as volunteers and in the community.

We here at Bay Gas Service would like to thank the volunteer firefighters and their families for helping the community in their time of need.

Happy Holidays! Be Safe...

REINALDO TIRADO (J.R.)
BAY GAS SERVICE

