



Gentlemen (and Ladies)! Start Your Engines!



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Time and tide is on our side. The unofficial start of summer, Memorial Day weekend, is now behind us. So, it is summer, and, BEFORE you start your engines, ready the boat!

As with any project, starting at the beginning is the best place to start and for "commissioning," i.e., getting the boat ready for service, the beginning is the front of the boat. For those who trailer their boats, the front of the boat is the trailer. Who wants to go flying down Sunrise Highway and see their boat doing somersaults? How do you prevent that? Start with the strap that comes out of the winch. Connected to the bow eye, it is the first line of defense. Pay out a few feet and make sure that there aren't any frayed or torn segments. If there are, you will need to cut out that entire segment and re-attach the strap. If you aren't sure how, get help from a competent mechanic or dock master.

While you're at it, why not spray the winch and all the moving parts with some penetrating oil. Pay out the entire strap if need be and re-coil it up so that you are sure you get a good covering of the moving parts with oil. Take a walk around the boat and be sure the binding straps are all equally in good shape.

As to the boat itself, open the anchor locker and flake out the anchor rode (the line and chain attaching the anchor to the "eye" in the bottom of your anchor locker/your boat) and lay the anchor "on the hard." Again, check the shackles for excessive wear as well as the rode itself.

Be sure that the navigation lights (red and green) are working. If not, take the bulb with you to the marine hardware store and replace it—plus spares.

Your storage area(s) might be forward so open them up and ensure that PFDs, tools, etc. are all in good condition. Check that there is no standing water in the compartment. If so, the "limber holes" are clogged and the water can't get to the bilge to be pumped overboard. Every ounce of weight that wasn't on the boat when the boat was manufactured changes its centers of buoyancy and gravity.

Next are the cockpit and the electronics. Disconnect them, spray them with some "white

grease," reconnect and test the gear. If a connector is corroded, replace it. This will keep salt in the air from penetrating your electronics.

If you haven't checked the PFDs yet, do it now. Check your whistle, your horn, your flares. Don't forget your fire extinguisher(s). If it isn't "in the green," chuck it. Also, gently shake it side to side, head over end. If you hear a "thunk," the dry chemical has solidified. It is now a good door stopper but not much else. You should hear a low "shh..." sound as the suppressant moves back and forth.

Check the fuel tank. Is the "sender wire" (wire that runs from the top of the tank (usually) to the fuel gauge) in good condition? How about the filter? Check the fuel lines too. Weak or cracked hoses must be replaced, along with rusted hose clamps. Stainless steel.

How are the battery and the clamps that attach to the posts?

The engine is the most obvious component to ready for service. Change the oil, including the oil down in the foot of the engine. You'll need a large straight-slot screwdriver for the two screws (high and low) that have to be backed out, a bucket and a quart of oil. Find all the grease fittings and gently pump new grease in until it comes out somewhere else. Don't forget the steering cable fitting. Be sure that the oil dipstick is properly seated.

BTW, if you do have a trailer, check the tires and lube the bearings. As with the engine grease, pump it in gently.

Reset the spark plug(s) in the engine before you put the cover back on. Some old models might start up when you turn the prop. Once ready to start the boat, be sure it is in water! You need the coolant! It will smoke at first from the fogging oil you laid in the fall but that will quickly pass.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2008@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members' matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."


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