

Prepare Your Boat for Summer!

There are many items to check and recheck before launching a boat for the first summertime trip. If you want professional help, find a good boat mechanic and take your boat in for a full inspection and tune up. The Coast Guard Auxiliary conducts free vessel safety checks throughout the year, and they will check all your safety equipment to make sure you are ready for the water. If you do decide to “do it yourself” look below at the list of ten items to keep in mind before setting your boat on the water:

- 1. Check Life Jackets:** Life Jackets are the most important piece of safety equipment on your boat. Ensure that they are still serviceable, with no rips, tears or other defects. Also make sure the kids’ jackets still fit.
- 2. Check Fire Extinguisher:** Fire extinguishers have a habit of discharging over the winter. Make sure you still have a fire extinguisher in your boat and that it is still charged.
- 3. Registration Check:** All boat registrations expire on December 31 of each year. Make sure you get a current decal on your boat before heading out.
- 4. Charge Batteries:** This is an important on often-overlooked mechanical issue. No power, no boating. Charge batteries and make sure they hold that charge.
- 5. Electronics and Lights:** Electronics can fail over the winter even without use. You should also make sure you navigation lights still work and examine exposed wiring for cracks and wear. Make sure that bilge pump still works.
- 6. Test Engine and Components:** Go ahead and fire up the boat before you leave the driveway. Don’t forget your “outboard ears”—a device that cools the engine out of the water. Starting the boat before you leave can save you real agony, time and hassle at the boat ramp.
- 7. The Hull:** Just walk around the hull to make sure it’s not cracked or damaged. A lot can happen in a year. Also make sure you have the plug for your boat and it is in good condition.
- 8. Tune up the Trailer:** The trailer wheel bearings need to be greased before you leave the driveway. If you have a winch and other equipment, make sure it works.
- 9. Ski and Tow Check:** Tubes, skis and other equipment must also be maintained. Rubber seals and inflatable devices can crack and leak. Make sure they are all ready to go, and don’t forget to bring your orange ski flag if you are going to tow someone.
- 10. Gas up and Go:** It’s always a good idea to *replace* the gas from last year. Make sure your fuel lines are connected properly and have no cracks or damage.