

Clear the decks, batten the hatches! Get Storm-Ready!!

by Mary SwiftSwan, [Afterguard Sailing Academy](#).

Boat Checklist:

1. Clean the cockpit scuppers – first, by hand, remove any leaves, food, hair, lint/cloth, etc. near or on the scupper grate. Use a hose against the scupper drains to fully clear them. Sweep the cockpit of all debris that could get into the scuppers.
2. Clear the deck of chairs and cushions. Put any loose gear below or take off the boat. If you have a SUP or other boat toys tied to lifelines or the deck, remove to below or off the boat.
3. If you have a dinghy, secure upside down on the foredeck if possible. If it's on strong davits, make sure to lift the bow higher than the stern. Pull the drain plug and put it in the navigation table. Cover if possible. In addition use fore and aft spring lines to secure so it does not sway on the davits. If you have an outboard on a mount, put it in a lazarette or below, or remove from the boat.
4. Remove or secure in their lockers batteries, jerry cans of fuel, engine fluids.
5. Secure cabinet doors and drawers and cabin doors below to keep items from becoming flying objects.
6. Close the head thru-hull. Close all but the engine intake thru-hulls. If a powerboat, check with your mechanic about a duck valve option for exhaust exits in the hull to prevent water intrusion if the boat is heeled hard by the winds.
7. Clean the bilge in case any oil is in the bilge when it is pumped overboard. Fines start at \$25,000 to \$75,000. Make sure the bilge pick-up hose protective grate is clean and clear. Run clean water through the bilge pump system to make sure it is working.
8. Wipe the area under the engine clean of oil. Place a white oil absorbent pad to be able to see if any oil or other engine fluid leaks.
9. Run the engine and turn on the electronics to charge up the batteries and expel moisture from the wiring for 20-40 minutes monthly. Best to run in gear when operating for more than 10 minutes. Ensure your dock lines are well set before putting into gear.
10. If you have a high-windage power or houseboat, with freely set furnishings, secure all in place. Wind heeling the boat causing furniture

movement is a common cause of tall-boat capsize.

Electrical:

11. Test the batteries. If you have a battery charger, set it on auto. Shorepower? Connect it.
12. From the dock box, take the electrical cord aboard at the closest place to the dock box. Run it along the deck, securing along the way if needed. Important to keep the cord out of the water to reduce electrolysis corrosion. Set it up so there is some flexibility for wind and current.
13. Check that the electrical cable has a working black secure ring on both ends. Secure to the dock and to the boat.
14. Turn on the boat AC panel and battery charger. The battery charger keeps the bilge pumps working. Important all the time, but KEY in a storm. Test the auto bilge pump lift switch, making sure it works. Turn the switch to ON at the dock box. Test an AC item on the boat to ensure it's on.
15. Turn off all instruments. Turn off lights, refrigerator and all systems. The bilge pump should be direct to battery wiring with an auto setting. The main battery selector should be set to off.

Sails:

16. Get all sails off the deck if not under proper and secured sail cover canvas or rolled up. Put sails in a cockpit locker or below in the head where they get some air circulation. They can hold moisture, so putting them on interior cushions can cause both to mildew. Upright in their bags on the cabin sole is better than lying flat on cushions, if you do not have a better place to stow them.
17. Roller-furler sails are easy for storms to destroy. Protect when rolling up with three wraps of the jib sheets around the middle of the sail for headsail(s). Then secure the jib sheets with tension from winches to cleats in the cockpit. The lines then become an extra secured safety line if you have to go forward of the cabin in a winter storm or at night.

Hull protection:

18. Hang fenders on either side of, but near, the beam, not midships. A fender can pop if pressed by the beam in a storm, possibly damaging both hull and fender. Use a lark's head hitch on a lifeline or round turn and two

half hitches on a shroud or stanchion. The often-used clove hitch litters the waterways with fenders. A clove hitch is defined as a 'temporary knot'.

19. Set bow and stern dock lines securely with clean 'cleat hitches' vs lines loosely figure-eight'ed around the cleat, unless boat weight is greater than 40,000 lbs. There are three ways to cleat depending on the weight of the boat. Use the one best for your boat.

20. Set fore and aft spring lines to minimize boat movement. Yes, on 22- to 25-ft boats too. After securing the lines, ensure the boat takes tension on two lines at a time on the same side: dock and spring, two springs, or two dock lines.

21. Do not over-tension the tie-down lines. A heavy boat can damage the dock or snap lines if pulled too tight. Let the boat float, but in the place you want it to stay. Where appropriate, for bow and stern lines, use snubbers to allow boat movement without snapping lines. Take a look at Pier 39.

22. When ready to leave the boat, use the windward dock lines to position the boat toward the middle of the slip, a minimum of four inches away from the leeward fenders. Outside-tie vessels, check with the harbor about breast line anchors or moorings to reduce pressure on the hull and docks. If used, consider a bow/stern bridle to evenly pull the boat off her fenders a few inches.

Docks

23. Remove anything from around the boat on the dock. Again chairs, plants, dock steps, boat brush and other equipment that is handy to leave out in the prime sailing season becomes a hazard to all boaters if gets into the waterway.

24. Items not nailed to the dock before a storm should go into the dock box or put below.

25. Secure the top of the dock box so it can't be blown up and into the boat.

At Anchor:

26. Two anchors at 45 degrees are a better holding option than one anchor for offshore or in a storm. A single anchor is very much at risk in a storm. Anchors twist out of their holding when the tides change. Through slack water they work loose, then reset when pulled in the new direction. With two anchors at 45 degrees, one is always holding. If tucked into a

protected corner for hurricane winds, add a third off the stern to remain facing the direction best to survive wild storm winds.

27. Mantus or Rocna are the only anchors with roll bars to stay attached to the ground, but two at 45 still works best. Bruce and Fortress anchors have amazing holding power in S.F. Bay.

28. Service the chain if on a hook for the winter months or anchor out on a regular basis.

29. Ensure seizing wire or plastic wire ties are in good order for shackles in the ground tackle.
