BOAT CARE FIELD GUIDE

Maintenance, winterization and spring-prep checklist

A practical planning tool for recreational boat owners in Northern Illinois. Use it to organize service conversations and seasonal preparation. It is not a substitute for manufacturer procedures, a qualified inspection or repairs by a trained technician.

OWNER		BOAT / HIN	
ENGINE / DRIVE		CURRENT HOURS	
STORAGE LOCATION		TARGET DATE	

Before every outing

- Check weather, water conditions, local advisories and the operating plan.
- Inspect hull, drain plug, bilge and visible fittings for damage, leaks or obstructions.
- Confirm fuel level and look for fuel, oil or coolant leaks and unusual odors.
- Test battery condition, navigation lights, horn, blower and required electronics.
- Verify life jackets, fire extinguisher, throwable device, lines, anchor and first-aid supplies.
- Start and observe the engine as permitted. Stop for alarms, abnormal smoke, noise or cooling flow.

Routine preventive maintenance

- Track engine hours, service dates, part numbers, fluid types and completed work.
- Follow manufacturer intervals for engine oil, gear lube, filters, spark plugs and belts.
- Inspect battery terminals, cables, charging performance and shore-power connections.
- Inspect steering, throttle, shift controls, propeller, drive, anodes and trim systems.
- Check hoses, clamps, cooling-water pickups and the condition of the impeller per schedule.
- Clean and protect exposed metal, canvas, upholstery and finishes using approved products.

WINTER STORAGE

Winterization planning

Freeze protection varies by engine, drive, plumbing, generator and installed equipment. Use the manufacturer procedure for every system and document what was completed.

Mechanical and fuel systems

- Stabilize or manage fuel as specified, operate treated fuel through the system when required and document the product used.
- Change engine oil and filter when specified; inspect used fluids for abnormal condition.
- Service gearcase or transmission lubricant and inspect for water intrusion or metal debris.
- Drain or protect raw-water circuits, engine blocks, manifolds, pumps and heat exchangers using the correct procedure.
- Fog or protect internal engine components only when the manufacturer calls for it.
- Inspect belts, hoses, clamps, exhaust components, mounts and visible wiring.

Boat systems and storage

- Drain and protect freshwater, washdown, livewell, head, water-heater and sanitation systems as equipped.
- Remove, charge or maintain batteries safely; record battery location and cable orientation.
- Clean bilge and compartments. Remove food, standing water and moisture-sensitive items.
- Inspect hull, outdrive, propeller, shaft, rudder, trim tabs, anodes and underwater fittings.
- Support and cover the boat for drainage, ventilation and snow load. Keep vents unobstructed.
- Record keys, removed parts, open drains, disconnected cables and spring recommissioning needs.

SPRING RECOMMISSIONING

Spring-prep checklist

Do not launch until winterization steps have been reversed, systems have been inspected and the boat has passed an appropriate operational check.

Restore and inspect

- [ ] Remove cover and supports carefully; inspect for moisture, pests, mildew and storage damage.
- [ ] Reinstall drain plugs, hoses, batteries and parts removed for storage. Verify every connection.
- [ ] Inspect fuel system, fluids, filters, belts, hoses, clamps, wiring and terminals.
- [ ] Inspect hull, running gear, propeller, drive, steering, controls, anodes and safety equipment.
- [ ] Flush and recommission freshwater, sanitation and onboard systems according to manufacturer guidance.
- [ ] Confirm registration, insurance, required safety gear and current emergency information.

Startup and launch

- [ ] Use the approved startup procedure and cooling-water supply. Watch gauges, alarms, exhaust and cooling flow.
- [ ] Check for fuel, oil, coolant and water leaks before and after warm-up.
- [ ] Test steering, shift, throttle, trim, bilge pumps, blower, lights, horn, electronics and shore power.
- [ ] Complete a controlled sea trial when conditions permit. Recheck fluid levels and the bilge afterward.
- [ ] Record new issues, completed service, engine hours and the next maintenance due date.

READY TO PLAN SERVICE?

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