



The School of Fish

by Duane Ryks

Preparing for the Upcoming Season –Part 2 of 2

Getting the boat ready.

This subject actually started months ago when I put my boat away for the winter. It is very important to take steps in the fall to make sure your boat, especially the engine, works in the spring. I change the lower unit lubrication, fog the cylinders, and put Sta-bil® in the remaining gas. There is more, but I will cover that at the end of the season.

I make it a point to charge the batteries a few times over the winter to keep them in good shape. An on-board charger makes this easy. It is one thing that I wouldn't go without on my boat.

Checking the engine.

If you have a four-stroke engine like I do, you should change the oil and filter at the beginning of every season and after every 100 hours. Make sure to use engine oil that has a marine rating. Check your Service Manual for your Manufacturer's recommendations.

I change spark plugs every season. When I fogged the engine prior to winter storage, I changed the plugs as long as I had them out anyway.

Next, I add a can of Sea Foam® to my fuel for at least the first tank or so. It helps to clean up the carburetor and jets.

Check the power trim fluid. Check fuel filters. Check the prop for damage. I usually pull the prop off and check to make sure there is no fishing line or weeds wrapped on the shaft.

Inspect the batteries. Make sure that they have a full charge. Check for corrosion around the terminals. Carefully remove the caps. Add distilled water if necessary.

One of the most valuable items for getting the outboard motor ready for the season is a garden hose attachment that you will find at most marine dealers. It has cups that

go over your motor's water intake holes on your lower unit. This allows you to start up your motor in the driveway. Do NOT run your motor out of the water if you do not have one of these attached with the water turned on. Some newer motors have a flush coupling built in.

You most likely will have to prime the bulb on your gas line the first time you start up. I start the engine up and let it run at idle speed for at least 3 minutes. If you put Sta-bil and Sea Foam in the fuel it will probably smoke a little more than you are used to. Be sure to stand clear of the prop and make sure you know where the children and pets are before putting the engine in gear. Do not rev a



Preparation in the fall will make sure that your boat and outboard motor are ready to hit the water as soon as spring arrives.

cold motor up until it has idled for a few minutes. While you have the motor running, pull the safety switch lanyard and the engine should stop. Reset the switch before trying to start the engine again.

Checking the boat.

Check to make sure the drain plug is in your boat before putting it in the water. I run all pumps and lights to make sure everything is working. I use an upholstery cleaner and UV protectant on my seats to keep them in good shape.

Check the manufacturer's recommendations—the wrong choice could ruin your seats. I apply a marine wax to my boat at least once a year.

Check to see that your boat registration is up to date. In Minnesota, boats that are over 16-feet in length require fire extinguishers and other safety equipment. Make sure that you meet all regulations.

Checking the trailer.

Inspect your tires for wear. If there are flat spots it could mean seized bearings or other problems such as bent axles. This happens more often than you might realize. If your trailer falls off the concrete at the boat access, or

you hit a curb, it can throw your alignment off. Your local machine shop can check and straighten the axle for you if you suspect damage.

Check your wheel bearings for grease or lubricant. Most boat trailers have some sort of built in lubrication system or bearing buddies. If there is any water in the bearings it can destroy them in no time.

Check the trailer wiring and lights. When you are submerging anything electrical problems can result.

If you have a trailer equipped with brakes, check the brake pads and rotors. Make sure the brake fluid reservoir is full.

Have a safe boating season. Remember the rules of the road apply to boating. If you drink, don't drive.

