

# The Time of the Year Boaters dislike, Winter Lay Up

## Boating Tips

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To guarantee your boat's safety and preparedness for next spring invest time now on winter layup.

Charge the battery. How well did it perform this past season? If you added water plus the battery is five years or older, maybe it's time for a new battery. Buy a new one when they go on sale later in the year.

Check and top off all fluids. If any fluids were excessively low, inspect fitting and lines for signs of a leak then either repair or replace. Squeeze all hoses for firmness, replacing ones that are soft or spongy.

Prepare to winterize the engine by visually inspecting the engine for signs of trouble. Rust around the exhaust fittings shows signs of leaking exhaust gasket or corrosion from the inside. Have a mechanic disassemble the exhausts, inspect then repair as needed. The mechanic will replace gaskets plus snug all bolts during reassembly for inexpensive piece of mind.

Milky colored oil. "Houston we have a problem," cooling water is mixing with the oil. Could be as simple as a gasket replacement or as critical as a cracked block. Time for a mechanic unless you know your way around an engine and the confines of the bilge . . . unless your engine is an outboard. Dark brown rather than red transmission fluid, "Houston, we have another problem." Dark fluid is burned tranny fluid meaning the transmission is overheating. Get to the source and repair the problem.

Along with fuel and fluid, engines and transmissions run on cooling water. Check all impellers replacing any that are suspect or are two years or older on IO, inboard, and outboards. Check service records for when the engine was last serviced along with what work the mechanic performed. While today's plugs last longer, the wires don't necessarily.

Next, flush the engine and components with fresh water adding marine antifreeze per your manual. If you have an onboard water system and head, evacuate both, adding marine antifreeze for that purpose. Inspect all through-hull fittings and hoses, repair and replace as needed. Don't forget the live well intake and output plus the pump itself. Dead bait doesn't catch fish.

You are inspecting for repairs that mechanics can do when needing work over the winter. Also, work completed during the winter gets you on the water quickly in the spring.

Last, wash the boat inside and out and towel dry inspecting for nicks and cracks. Is that crack just a stress crack or signs of something worse? If a structural safety hazard, find the cause and repair it.

Clean the upholstery with an approved cleaner and preservative. Also clean and seal all canvas.

Unless your boat is spending the winter in the shop, clean, wax, and buff the fiberglass. Finally, put the boat in storage or under cover. It's a good idea to flush the trailer plus check and repair all wiring and lights. Look for signs of rust through that needs fixing.

Spring will be one weekend of commissioning and you'll be on the water earlier and safer.

This article is given courtesy of the Pamlico Sail & Power Squadron. The Squadron schedules boating education courses and seminars throughout the year. The winter is a great time to further your boating education. To learn more email our Education Officer at [psps@gmail.com](mailto:psps@gmail.com) or contact Linda at 252-964-3009. Courses on Advanced Piloting begins 1/23/18 and Engine Maintenance begins in February.