

Plan Ahead for Forecasted Storms

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Have you developed a tropical storm and hurricane plan? Forecasters predict an active hurricane season for 2024 and we are well into the season already. Where will you keep your boat during a hurricane? Will it be hauled before a storm? When will you trailer your boat to a safe place? It's important to develop a plan early, ahead of the storm.

Heavy evacuation traffic could prevent you from reaching your marina if you wait too long. Make sure you already have extra rope, chafe guards, anchors and fenders. Once a storm is forecast, the local marine store will sell out of these items quickly.

Talk with your marina and find out what your marina's hurricane plan. Learn what the marina expects from you so you will be prepared. Does your dock master call for you to take certain steps? What are those steps?

Stay ahead of the storm

Part of your hurricane plan should be started during a hurricane watch. Don't wait, if you do so, you may not have time to do what is needed. In addition, evacuation congestion and the storm's outer bands of wind and rain will hinder your preparation.

Pull your trailerable boat

Remove your boat from the water if at all possible. Waves, spray and rain will almost always overcome smaller, open boats and high-performance powerboats. Move all trailerable boats inland and ensure you have a place to store your boat in advance.

If your boat is not trailerable

Haul it and secure it on shore or at a boat yard if you can. You may need a reservation for a spot held for you. Confirm with your insurance provider what they will cover for named storms and make early plans with a boat yard for hauling.

Prepare your boat to weather the storm

If you can't haul out, take precautions to give your boat the best chance of weathering the storm. Once a hurricane warning has been issued, remove anything that could catch the wind, and tie your boat with extra lines and fenders.

- Charge batteries and disconnect the electricity. Charging batteries ensures your bilge pumps will work for as long as possible. Next, disconnect the electric, water and other dock connections; shut off fuel lines; close through-hull fittings; and cap or plug unvalved through-hull fittings, such as sink drains.
- Protect your engines. Water finds a way into every opening, so cover engine room vents, and plug the exhaust pipes at the stern.
- Take down antennas and remove outriggers. Remove as many items as you can from the boat, and lash down anything remaining on deck.
- Prepare the boat's interior. If your boat has a cabin, remove all loose items. Clean out the refrigerator, cabinets and drawers, which may open with the boat's violent motion. If possible, remove drapes, cushions, mattresses and other cloth items that could become soaked from leaks.
- Remove electronics and cover instrument gauges. Remove electronics from the boat if possible, and cover both the holes and instrument gauges with plastic and tape.
- Seal windows, hatches and doorways. Because wind-driven rain will enter the boat through any crack or crevice, use tape to make all openings and seams as watertight as possible.

Securing your boat on a mooring or safe harbor.

- Secure the boat in its moorings. Any boat in the water should be secured in a snug harbor. (Don't consider riding out the storm at sea) Identify which harbors will be snug and which will be vulnerable in a hurricane.
- Consider storm surge when mooring a boat. Hurricanes commonly cause surges, so a seawall or sandy spit that normally protects a harbor may not offer any protection in a hurricane. A boat moored facing into the wind will best weather the storm, so if possible, turn the boat with its bow to the wind.

Steps to secure your boat in a mooring

- Use mooring lines a quarter-inch larger to double the diameter of your current lines. Double all the mooring lines on your boat, including spring lines.
- Distribute the load evenly using several cleats. Your boat should look like it's inside a spider web.
- Allow as much line as possible for the tide and storm surge. Rig by crossing spring lines fore and aft and attach them high on pilings to allow for the tidal surge. Spring lines should be at least as long as the boat. If possible, attach longer lines to pilings outside your normal berthing area.
- Protect your line by using chafing gear (several feet of garden hose or leather or old fire hose) at each point where the line meets the boat. Consider that your lines will be angled downward as the water rises.

This article is given courtesy of your local America's Boating Club of the Pamlico a great resource to help you increase your knowledge, navigation skill building and safety. We have short seminars and courses conducted throughout the year. We invite you to visit our website, <https://www.pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org>, or contact Kelly at pspsed@gmail.com to learn what opportunity is coming up. Be sure to visit us on [Facebook](#) as well!