

Electronics Winterizing

Provided by Mike Karlovich
ABC-Pamlico Writer



In the past we have seen articles on winterizing your boat for long periods of lack of use, during the cold winters. Opinions vary on what needs to be done with electronics that will have to endure a cold and damp winter. A safe bet is that the more you prepare the more you reduce unpleasant surprises later. I have a chart plotter monitor that is no longer working because I did not prepare it for winter. It's very old and I hope I can replace it sometime. Electronics are becoming so prevalent and is becoming so critical that protecting them is key.

- Clean and cover your electronics
 - A microfiber cloth is a great cloth to clean with as it will also pick up any dust tucked in around the buttons.
 - If there is any saltwater buildup clean with bottled water and avoid chemicals.
 - VHF Radios, Fish Finders and Depth Transducers should be cleaned and checked for mounting and alignment as well.
- Remove the electronics if possible
 - This is what I should have done for my chart plotter monitor. If you take them from your boat and put them inside your home for winter they will be stored in temperatures and humidity that are much better for the electronics
 - If your boat will be spending time in a dry stack or warehouse, electronics may not be covered for theft or damage by that party's insurance
 - It's a good idea to document the wiring setup so you feel confident about reinstalling in the spring
 - Wrap any connectors to ensure they are protected from moisture and the elements
- Prepare steps: if you are not able to remove the electronics
 - Disconnect the batteries if your boat is not in the water
 - Put a paper bag of rice or silica bead packets behind the unit helps to absorb moisture near the wiring harness. (I should have done this)

- During long layups where the electronics stay, periodically turn them on for a few minutes to reduce internal moisture buildup. (I should have done this)
- Check contact points and cables for corrosion and chafe as best you can, mice and other rodents love to chew on cables.
- Inspection of your antennas and ensure they are correctly mounted
- Backup your devices before you lay up your boat. Keep your waypoints, routes and tracks and favorite fishing spots for next year.
- If you need to update any versions of software it might be good idea to have this complete as well. Backup before then after just in case.
- Boat wrap can provide another layer of protection from rain and snow. When shrink wrapping your boat, be careful of the antennas and radars and not wrapping the electronics too tightly

Whether your boat will be in a slip, dry dock or warehouse, a few minutes on cleaning, securing and checking your marine electronics will make you a happier boater when it's time to go boating next season. I hope these ideas will spark action for you and you will not have to look for replacement equipment next year.

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 in-depth courses conducted throughout the year. The next course being offered is the Engine Maintenance Course. To learn more details, contact Kelly at pspsed@gmail.com or give her a call at 551-427-0585.