

# Items to Aid your Survival if you must Abandon Ship

## Boating Tips

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You should be prepared to abandon ship anywhere and anytime. When in doubt, get off the boat. Increase everyone's probability of survival and rescue with an at ready, ditch bag tailored to your boat and boating area. A certified life raft is probably not needed when you never leave the river or sound.

In abandoning ship put on life jackets then, toss overboard everything that floats, coolers, fenders, cushions, etc. A ditch bag must float such as a dry bag(s).

Minimally, your ditch bag includes:

1. Basic information for everyone aboard along with personal contacts
2. Wallets, watches and personal jewelry
3. Boat and engine information, registration, insurance etc
4. Handheld flairs plus a flare gun and rockets
5. Mirror plus trailing pennant or die pack.
6. Suitable first aid kit with SPF 50 sunscreen
7. Drinking water (½ gallon per person per day) along with high-calorie snacks
8. Charged, waterproof, handheld marine radio
9. Charged cell phone in an individual dry bag
10. Floating flashlight
11. Thermal blankets to provide warmth as well as protection from the sun
12. A dozen 3' to 6' strands of the line
13. 20' to 30' of medium size, yellow floating line
14. Floating knife



Be sure to put food and water in individual bags so, if for instance the food sinks, all is not lost. Everyone needs a hat since people lose body heat through the head plus sunburn protection of the head and face. Wear shoes to protect feet when going overboard.

When abandoning ship, you don't know whether or not anyone heard the mayday call. So, you don't know how long before the rescue, 1 hour, 5 hours or 5 days. Anticipate at least two to three days; one day for people to realize you're missing and another day or two to locate you. It may be longer.

When possible abandon ship into a dinghy or life raft. Employ everything that floats to stay afloat. Critically important in rough seas, is preventing loss of the basic survival items. Tie the floating ditch bag to an unused life jacket or two or one of the people or dinghy. Tie the flares, handheld radio and cell phone to the life jackets of individual people, the dinghy, anything that floats. Lash people together, so they don't become separated, hence the long, floating yellow line.

Items nice to have in a ditch bag are an extra, fully charged radio and cell phone battery. More water and food, fishing hooks and line, additional thermal blankets. Again, tailor the ditch bag to the boat and number of people on board along with your purpose for being on the water, cruising to the Chesapeake versus fishing off Stumpy Point.

If the abandoned boat remains even partially afloat, stay with that boat. The boat is easier to spot plus it aids in your floatation. Fully abandon the boat if and only if it begins fully slipping below the water. Stay together, lashing one to the other as a large object, two or more people is easier to spot than one individual.

Check the ditch bag and replenish it before each trip, particularly electronic items. You and everyone aboard can survive for rescue if you prepare for the worst with a ditch bag.

This article is given courtesy of the Pamlico Sail & Power Squadron, America's Boating Club™. To learn more about boating and boating safety, email Linda, our Education Officer at [psps@gmail.com](mailto:psps@gmail.com) or contact her at 252-964-3009. You can also receive FREE Vessel Safety Checks performed by certified inspectors. Contact Fred at [VSC@pspsnc.com](mailto:VSC@pspsnc.com) or call him at 948-0682 to schedule your inspection.