

Weathering the Forecasted Storm

Writer: Biff Matthews and
United States Power Squadrons



America's Boating Club™
Pamlico Sail & Power Squadron

Boaters should develop a well-thought-out tropical storm and hurricane plan as the hurricane season begins. Forecasters predict an active, possibly record-breaking, hurricane season for 2020.

Explore and know where you will keep your boat during a hurricane and whether it can be hauled before a storm. Bring home trailer boats early, as heavy evacuation traffic could prevent you from reaching your marina. Make sure you 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 is before the season starts. Learn what the marina expects from you. Does your dock contract call for you to take certain steps?

Stay ahead of the storm

Part of your hurricane plan should be to act during a hurricane watch. Don't wait until a warning is issued. If you do so, you may not have time to move your boat. In addition, evacuation congestion and the storm's outer bands of wind and rain will hinder your preparation.

WATCH	WARNING
Tropical storm and/or hurricane conditions are POSSIBLE in Watch area	Tropical storm and/or hurricane conditions are EXPECTED in Warning area
Issued up to 48 hours in advance of tropical storm force winds	Issued up to 36 hours in advance of onset of tropical storm force winds

Hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force. **Watches & Warnings are issued in advance of onset of tropical storm force winds, 39-73mph**

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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 with low freeboard. Move all trailerable boats inland.

If your boat is not trailerable

Haul it and secure it on shore or at a boat yard. Confirm with your insurance provider what they will cover for named storms and make early plans with a boat yard for hauling. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study found that boats stored ashore had a better chance of being saved than boats stored in the water.

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. 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.
- Remove loose deck items. Remove Bimini tops, plastic, canvas and Plexiglas from the boat entirely. 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. Maintain a list of items removed and those left on board. Items of value should be marked so that they can be readily identified. You should also consider maintaining a video or photographic record of the boat and its inventory in a secure location other than the vessel itself for future reference. 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 duct tape.
- Seal windows, hatches and doorways. Because wind-driven rain will enter the boat through any crack or crevice, use duct tape to make all openings and seams as watertight as possible.
- Consolidate all records including insurance policies, a recent photo of your vessel, boat registration, equipment inventory, and the lease agreement with the marina or storage facility. Ensure that you include the telephone numbers of appropriate authorities for easy reference.

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 even think about riding out the storm at sea unless you're the skipper of an aircraft carrier.) The trick is deciding which harbors will be snug and which will be vulnerable in a hurricane.

Consider storm surge when mooring a boat. Hurricanes commonly cause surges of 10 feet or more, 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.

Steps to secure your boat in a slip

- 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 at each point where the line meets the boat. Use several feet of garden hose or leather, and consider that your lines will be angled downward as the water rises.

After the hurricane has passed.

Be aware of possible downed electrical wires which should be considered "hot" and avoid these areas until the power company or electrical maintenance personnel are notified. Although a building, house or boat may be without power, generators may be operating and the electrical lines will be charged. There may be stray AC current from submerged outlets, shore cords in the water, damaged vessel systems, etc. Do not enter the water!

This article is given the courtesy of the Pamlico Sail & Power Squadron, we are America's Boating Club®. To learn more about our boating courses, email our Education Officer at psps@gmail.com. We hope to be able to restart our classroom courses and seminars as federal and state guidelines allow. In the meantime, reference our website at <https://pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org/> to learn more and to keep up on the education opportunities offered. Be sure to visit us on [Facebook](#) as well!