

Boating Checklist

By Jefferey Rondman

Before Departing

Fuel

This is obvious, but make sure you have enough to get where you're going.

Personal Flotation Devices

Also called safety jackets by some, these are a must before going anywhere.

Fire Extinguishers.

The reason for this should be obvious, but be sure that they stay in working order!

Tools

Make sure that tools that would be used to fix problems on board are on the boat, and some spare ones as well.

Battery

Be sure that the battery is fully charged, cleaned and not corroded. Replace if needed.

Distress Signals.

Do your distress signals (horns, lights, flares, etc) work properly? If not, fix or replace them!

Forecast

Squalls can do damage to boats, so pay attention to the forecast.

Equipment

Anchors

This is common sense, though some people don't think about it; check for weak or broken links, and replace if needed.

Masts

Sailboats need to be checked over thoroughly for cracks in the masts after bad storms, especially if the boat has tipped over.

Sails

Check for rips or tears; quite often they can be patched, but sometimes the sail has to be replaced.

Oars

Rowboats that do use these need to make sure that the oars don't have splits in them, and are still in usable shape.

Spare Batteries

Always have at least one, preferable two spare batteries, and a charger on board, just in case.

Leaks

Check for leaks in all systems of the boat. Replace necessary lines where needed.

Grab rails

Ensure that the rails are tight in the deck, and have not come loose.

Non-skid surfaces

Make sure that the non-skid surfaces are just that; there should not be slippery spots that need to be fixed or replaced.

What to Pack

Food

At the very least, have a day's worth of food with you on the boat at all times.

Water

Bottled water is a necessity as well; salt water will dehydrate you. Take a day's worth.

Communication

Radios and cell phones are the best way to keep in contact with the mainland, especially if a storm hits.

First Aid Kit

Make sure that this is fully stocked with everything, and keep the items in it fresh. Extra gauze and pressure bandages would be great.

Lights

Flashlights for getting around in the dark onboard if the power goes out.

Sunscreen

This is a given, unless you want to look like a lobster and turn bright red.

Identification

Because you'll be on the water, put your identification in waterproof envelope or something similar, along with a health card.

Directions

Your itinerary should be listed with the local authorities, and you should at the very minimum have a nautical map.

Tips for Safety

Maintenance

Always maintain your boat, and follow your different checklists to a tee.

Itinerary

Turn one in with the local authorities so that if something happens, they know where to start looking.

Practice drills

Use these to make sure you know how to safely deal with emergencies on your boat when needed.

Awareness

Always stay aware of what's going on around you; the weather can change, something can break instantly, so pay attention.