

SPRING COMMISSIONING CHECKLIST

Before You Launch:

- Check the condition of antifouling paint and [repaint](#) if necessary.
- Inspect all [hose clamps](#) for rust, and replace as necessary. Double clamp fuel lines, exhaust hoses, and, if possible, any hoses below the waterline with marine-rated stainless hose clamps. With the exception of scupper or deck drains, keep seacocks closed when you are away from the boat.
- Inspect all [hoses](#) for stiffness, rot, leaks, and cracking, and replace any that are faulty. Make sure they fit snugly.
- [Inspect prop\(s\)](#) for dings, pitting, and distortion. Make sure cotter pins are secure.
- Grip the prop (on inboard drive systems) and try moving the shaft up and down and side to side. If it's loose and can be wiggled, the cutless bearing may need to be replaced.
- Check the rudderstock to ensure it hasn't been bent. Operate the wheel or tiller to ensure the steering works correctly. Check the rudder bearing for unusual play or movement.
- Inspect the hull for blisters, distortions, and stress cracks.
- [Inspect, lubricate, and exercise seacocks or thru-hulls.](#)
- Make sure your [engine intake sea strainer](#) is not cracked or bent from ice, free of corrosion, and is clean and properly secured.
- With inboards, check the engine shaft and rudder [stuffing boxes](#) for correct adjustment. A stuffing box should leak no more than two or three drops each minute when the prop shaft is turning. Check the shaft log hose for deterioration and rusty hose clamps.
- Use a garden hose to check for deck leaks at ports and hatches. Renew caulk or [gaskets](#) as necessary.
- [Inspect and test the bilge pump](#) and [float switch](#) to make sure they're working properly. Inspect the pump hose.
- Check stove and remote [LPG tanks](#) for loose fittings, leaking hoses, and properly functioning shutoff systems. Use the pressure gauge to conduct a leak down test to check for system leaks.
- Inspect dock and anchor lines for [chafe and wear](#).
- If equipped, ensure that the stern drain plug is installed.
- After the boat is launched, check all thru-hulls for leaks.

Engines and Fuel Systems:

- Inspect fuel lines, including fuel tank fill and vent hoses, for softness, brittleness, or cracking. Check all joints for leaks, and make sure all lines are well supported with noncombustible clips or straps with smooth edges.
- Inspect fuel tanks, fuel pumps, and filters for leaks. Ensure portable tanks and lines are completely drained of stale fuel before filling with fresh fuel. Clean or [replace fuel filters](#) if not done before winterization.
- Every few years, remove and [inspect exhaust manifolds and risers](#) for corrosion (for inboard and I/O boats).
- [Charge battery](#). Clean and tighten electrical connections, especially both ends of battery cables. Use a wire brush to clean battery terminals, and top off cells with distilled water (if applicable).
- Inspect bilge ventilation intake and blower ducting for damage or leaks and run blower to confirm correct operation.
- Test engine warnings and alarms.

Engine Outdrives and Outboards:

- [Inspect rubber outdrive bellows](#) for cracked, dried, and/or deteriorated spots (look especially in the folds) and replace if suspect.
- Check [power steering](#) and power trim oil levels.
- [Replace anodes](#) that are more than half wasted away.
- Inspect outer jacket of [control cables](#). Cracks or swelling indicate corrosion and mean that the cable must be replaced.
- Inspect [lower unit oil](#) level in sterndrives and outboards and top off as necessary.

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Sailboat Rigging:

- Inspect swage fittings for cracks and heavy rust (some discoloration is acceptable). Inspect wire halyards and running backstays for “fishhooks” and rust.
- Remove tape on turnbuckles and lubricate threads, preferably with Teflon. Replace old tape with fresh tape, and ensure that water is able to freely drain from it.
- If you suspect the core around a chainplate is damp, remove the chainplate to inspect and make repairs.
- Inspect masthead sheaves and all blocks to make sure they're running freely.

Trailers:

- [Inspect tire treads and sidewalls](#) for cracks or lack of tread and replace as necessary. Check air pressure; don't forget the spare.
- Inspect wheel bearings and [repack](#) as necessary.
- [Test all lights](#); replace any broken bulbs or lenses.
- Inspect winch to make sure it's working properly. Inspect hitch chains.
- Inspect trailer frame and axel(s) for rust. Sand and paint to prevent further deterioration.
- [Inspect brakes](#) and brake fluid reservoir.

Safety:

- A [new law that went into effect in 2021](#) requires a vessel operator to use either a helm or outboard lanyard or wireless engine cutoff switch on certain vessels. Be sure your switch is working properly and the lanyard is in serviceable condition. Add fresh batteries to wireless fobs or wrist-worn devices.
- Check dates on pyrotechnic flares, which expire 42 months after manufacture.
- Inspect fire extinguishers. A [new regulation goes into effect April, 20, 2022](#) that requires a 12-year expiration for disposables and has different carriage requirements for older and newer vessels.
- Ensure you have properly sized and wearable [life jackets](#) in good condition for each passenger, including kids. Check inflatable life jacket cylinders

and dissolvable “pill” bobbins in auto-inflating models.

- Test smoke, carbon monoxide (CO), fume, and bilge [alarms](#).
- Check running lights and spare bulb inventory.
- Update [chartplotter software](#).
- Replenish [first-aid kit](#) items that may have been used last season or have expired.
- Check the operation of VHF radio(s) and that the MMSI number is [correctly programmed](#) in. (BoatUS members can obtain a free MMSI number at [BoatUS.com/MMSI](#).)
- Get a free vessel safety check from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadrons. Learn more at [cgaux.org/vsc](#).

For the Dock:

- In addition to checking its entire length for wear or abrasions, check both ends of the shore power cable connections as well as the shore power receptacle on the boat for burns, which indicate the cable and/or boat's shore power inlet or the dock's receptacle must be replaced.
- Test ground-fault protection on your boat and dock, and know how to [prevent Electric Shock Drowning](#).

The Paperwork:

- Make sure your boat registration or [documentation](#) is up to date. Don't forget your trailer tags.
- Review your boat insurance policy and update coverage if needed. BoatUS provides free quotes at [BoatUS.com/Insurance](#). Provide a copy to your marina or club.
- Ensure your BoatUS Membership is in good standing, and check your TowBoatUS coverage by logging into [BoatUS.com/Account](#), or join at [BoatUS.com/Membership](#).
- [Download the free BoatUS App](#) to make it easy to summon on-water assistance as well as to check tide tables, weather, and exclusive discounts.