

Guidelines for vessels going into and returning from lay-up

After weeks or months of inactivity during the current COVID-19 crisis, Sunderland Marine's Risk Management Surveyor, Alan Ure offers some advice to those returning from lay-up:

Fuel System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is advisable to drain down any water and sediment from the tanks. Pre-filters, drain and clean bowl, fit new filter elements. Fit new engine mounted fuel filters. Fill fuel tank fully (reduces the risk of condensation and bacterial growth). Use an additive when filling (in accordance with machinery manufacturers spec.). Bleed fuel through filters etc. run engine. Ensure all filler caps are fitted, sealed and secure.
Freshwater Coolant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure any inhibitor is charged as per manufacturers spec. A correct mixture of water/anti-freeze can also protect against internal corrosion. Don't be tempted to drain the freshwater cooling system, leaving in drained condition will allow corrosion to build up within the engine internal water-ways.
Seawater System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close seacocks and overboard discharge valves. Drain down seawater systems. (Rubber Impeller type) inactivity tends to allow the impeller blades to take on the permanent folded shape of the cam which can greatly reduce the pumps efficiency. Inactivity can also render the rubber impeller brittle and prone to failing. Extract impeller if possible.
Bilges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure bilges are clear of debris. Manually check bilge alarm operation. Ensure all pumps are equipped for immediate use (electric/manual).
Lubrication System Engine/ Gearbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drain engine/gearbox oil (removes impurities accumulated within used oil). Replenish oil and filters, run the engine and gearbox to distribute the clean oil through the system. Condensation within a gearbox is common, where gearing and upper casings are above the oil level, can be affected by rust formation. Gearing and upper casing are dependent on splash feed from the gearbox revolving. If mooring, and positioning of neighbouring harbour traffic allow, operate gearbox ahead and astern briefly to create the splash effect required to scatter the oil.

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Sterngear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check internal shaft seal arrangement for condition and any trace of seawater ingress.
Steering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check oil levels, periodically operate. Lubricate mechanical steering, rudder linkages and rudder post tube.
Exhaust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover outlet pipe to eliminate the possibility of water back flow into the engine.
Deck Machinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lubricate/grease as required.
Signage	It is imperative that a WARNING SIGN is placed in the vicinity of the starter switch to indicate which systems are isolated, disconnected or capped
Safety Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety of crew and vessel being paramount, please pay particular attention to safety equipment i.e. service and expiry dates which may fall during the laid-up period. Liferaft (+ hydrostat release unit), Lifejackets (lights), PLB's, E.P.I.R.B. (+ hydrostat release units), Flares, Man Overboard Smoke Floats, First Aid Kit. Please Note, items listed above are not definitive, vessel class requirements will vary.
Batteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check fluid levels. Coat terminals with Vaseline or similar. Fully charge the batteries prior to engaging isolators or disconnecting a battery lead from a terminal. Charge batteries regularly. Batteries left to drain down fully increases the risk the battery may become defective internally and not accept a charge.
Electrics/Electronics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dampness is the enemy of electrical/electronic equipment. Ensure engine room and wheelhouse have adequate ventilation. Regular power-ups can assist in preserving the operational condition of these units.
Cabin/Galley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close off gas and oil supplies to stoves and heaters. Ensure adequate ventilation. Remove personal items i.e. sleeping bags, spare clothing etc. ashore. Move or raise bunk mattress's to allow air circulation.
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all valuables are removed ashore. Secure all doors and hatches. Frequent visits to the vessel to check the general condition and in particular bilges levels.
Mooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the vessel is being left for longer periods, please consult the tide-table to allow correct setting of the mooring ropes (SMI had 5 casualties in one weekend due to spring-tides). If berthed away from your home port, please consult the Harbourmaster in relation to any mooring abnormalities within the harbour (exposed irregular rock or piling below water-line / sediment build-up or holes on harbour floor).

Following some of these simple suggestions can stave off further unwanted, and costly down-time.

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