

Pre-departure Checklist

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDS)

- At least one Coast Guard approved device per passenger and a minimum of two onboard. An additional throwable device is required if the vessel is more than 16 feet long.
- Explain the location and use of all PFDs to passengers and crew that may be new to the vessel.

Sound Producing Devices (Whistle)

- Must have a horn capable of producing a four-second blast audible for at least 1/2 mile. If a portable air horn, have a spare can of air or an alternate device.

Lights and Shapes

- All navigation lights, as required, in working order. Instrumental lights working.
- If you intend to engage in an activity that requires a day shape, have the required shapes.
- Flashlight onboard.

Distress Signals

- Accessible flares, day signals, etc., stored in a dry location.
- Carry signals at all times even if not required by the Coast Guard.
- Inform the crew and passengers of their location and their use.

Tools and Spares

- Basic tool box onboard and a bucket for bailing.
- Box of spares aboard, e.g. fuel filter, light bulbs, head parts, through-hull plugs, etc.

Ventilation

- On any powered vessel or auxiliary powered sailboat, or vessels using LPG for cooking or heat, check that all interior spaces are well ventilated before departure.
- If fuel smells are detected before ventilating, check after running the blowers for several minutes before starting. If odor persists, look for the source.

Fire Extinguishers

- Accessible fire extinguisher. Do you have at least those required by the U.S.C.G.?
- Check to be sure mounts are secure and functional before departure.

Fuel and Oil

- Are your tanks topped-off? If not, have enough fuel to provide a reasonable margin of safety for your return.
- Check the engine oil and coolant level.
- Make sure to carry oars or paddles. In some states it is a requirement.**

Bilges

- Check to be sure bilges are reasonably dry and that pumps are not running excessively. Clean up any spilled oil or waste in bilges to prevent overboard discharge.

Battery Care

- If you have a dual charging system, is the selector switch in the proper position? Is the power on to the entire vessel?
- Spare batteries for accessories such as a hand-held radio, flashlight, portable navigational aid, etc.
- If they are rechargeable, are they charged?

Weather Forecast

- Did you check the weather forecast?
- Radio onboard to receive weather updates.

Docking and Anchoring

- At least one anchor set up and bent-on to your anchor line.
- Two or three extra docklines in case of unusual conditions dockside.
- Visually inspect the lines you use for chafe or wear. At least two fenders onboard for docking or towing if required.

Documentation

- Have the ship's papers, registration, radio license, license or boating safety course I.D., fishing permit, etc. onboard.
- Have the chart or charts for the area you intend to cruise in, regardless of your level of local knowledge.

Boating Offshore - EPIRB and Liferaft

Trailer Boating - Before leaving home:

- Is the battery charged?
- Do you have the keys to the boat?
- Is the plug in the boat?

Trailer Checks

- Check tire pressure and grease wheel bearings.
- Make sure hitch is secure and safety chains attached.
- Make sure boat is tied down properly.
- LOOK BEFORE BACKING UP.

Sailing Vessels

- Check sails, lines, sheets and rigging.
- Don't forget the tiller and centerboard.
- WATCH FOR OVERHEAD POWER LINES when raising the mast.
- Have you filed your float plan with a responsible person?

- Acquaint all passengers with use and location of safety equipment, radio, docking & undocking plans, etc.**