

WINTERIZING

I leave my boat in the water. I put in antifreeze, drain the fresh water tank and pump everything dry, and put antifreeze in the head. Once a month I hand crank the engine.

- Mace Mayasaki

I do the same thing, but I run my engine all through the winter.

- Stuart Horn

I kept an electric heater in my boat this year. It kept the boat dry and warm all winter.

- Phil Rogers

I do the same as the others. In addition I top off the fuel to stop the growth of fungus.

- Russ Walker

And to prevent condensation. Yes.

- Mace Mayasaki

Since my boat was out of the water all winter, the hull distorts a little from being on land. You have to be careful about the shaft being out of alignment. I am going to back off on the engine mounting bolts and the shaft will move if it is out of alignment. If it doesn't move it is all right. I am not going to disconnect the shaft.

- Sam Amoss

I keep my boat in the water all winter in the Annapolis area. I have a bubbler system which keeps my slip ice free; however, I don't think this is really necessary since ice will do little damage beyond possibly scratching the bottom paint at the water line. What is important is to make sure the dock lines are not too tight because tides are lower when the wind blows the water out of the creek or bay -- in my case, when blowing from the northwest.

Of course, I drain the water tank up forward, using a JABSCO pump attachment on my 1/4" drill, and also pumping the water out of the lines to the sinks with the foot pumps. I also drain the head by unscrewing the red drain plug below the toilet bowl (altho the head procedure will now depend on what one does about the new Coast Guard regulations; I have installed an Lectra-San.)

I used to drain the engine; mine is a diesel. I did this by removing the drain plug on the starboard side of the engine, down near the oil dip stick. However, in the last few years the inside of my engine has gotten so cruded up that the drain no longer drains, even if I run the engine with the drain plug out. I suppose I could ream it out, but I have resorted to another method because I sail all winter as long as the creek doesn't freeze.

Essentially, what I am doing now is keeping the boat interior above freezing with 4 light bulbs of 200 watts each (actually, 2 are spares). I made two boards of 1x4 lumber long enough to fit across the engine well and across the forward berth area in front of the peak area adjacent to the head. I mounted two ceramic sockets about a foot apart on each board for the light bulbs, and of course wired up the whole thing. I put one board in the forward compartment, leaving the head door propped half-way open, I remove the step above the engine, and put the other board across the engine well, with the bulbs pointing down. The light bulbs give off enough heat forward and aft to keep the boat interior well above freezing in the coldest weather; actually one 200 watt bulb fore and aft is enough, but I use two in case one should burn out from continuous night and day service. You could also use heat lamps in place of the light bulbs, but they are more expensive and burn out more quickly.

I've been doing this for five years without any trouble. When I want to go sailing, it is a cinch to disconnect the boards and remove them from the boat, since there is no permanent installation. The danger with this arrangement is any interruption in the electric current to the boat -- I'd really be in trouble if this happened for more than a few hours. My boat is visible from my apartment window, so I can keep tabs on it constantly. I don't know how I'd feel about this arrangement if I could only check the boat once a week or less. However, I am confident that if the engine is drained of water, nothing else need be done. Some have put anti-freeze in the engine by sucking it up from a pail with the water intake hose; I have never done this myself.

- Art Levin

Have you tried winterizing your bilge with some automobile windshield washer anti-freeze?