

Clean Boating Spring Maintenance (Dewinterization) Tips



If you remove your boat from the water over the winter months, or it has been in storage over a long period of time, conducting routine maintenance and cleaning prior to launching it for the first time can save you a lot of headaches and help minimize your boat's environmental impact over the course of the boating season.

Remember, always follow manufacturers' recommendations for keeping a proper maintenance schedule and parts replacement.

Step 1: Visual inspection

- Remove boat cover and cowling and conduct a visual inspection of your outboard motor from top to bottom.
- Look for signs of critters that may have chosen to make your boat their home over the winter months.
- If you do see signs of critters (droppings, shredded material, chew marks, etc.), take extra caution to inspect operational components for damage (fuel lines, electrical wiring, etc.).

Step 2: Check hoses, wiring, and belts

- Look at your boat's wiring, hoses, belts, and other "on-engine" components to make sure they are in good shape, firmly attached (not loose or dangling), and free from corrosion, rot, or other damage.
- Ensure there are no leaking fluids such as fuel, oil, or cooling water.
- Check hoses for cracks and broken hose clamps, and make sure all wire ends are securely attached to their termination points.

Step 3: Pay attention to your fuel feed line

- Thoroughly inspect your fuel feed line, primer bulb, and fuel line clamps.
- Replace any sections of fuel line that are cracked, worn, or damaged, and replace rusty or damaged hose clamps.
- Any that are suspect should be replaced with U.S. Coast Guard-approved A1- or A15-certified fuel hose.
- If your hand gets black after touching fuel feed lines, or primer bulb, it is time to replace!

**If you are using an external fuel tank, check the outside for leaks, cracks, or any other damage. Do the same if you have an internal tank but follow the fuel line all the way from the engine to where it attaches to the fuel tank (and at every junction, including the water separator/filter).*

Step 3: Check bilge and fuel water separator

- Always mark fuel/water separating filter with replacement date when it is installed.
 - Follow manufacturers' recommendations for replacement schedule.
 - It is generally recommended to be changed every 50 hours, or at least once a year.
- Remove any debris that may have accumulated inside the hull, bilge, and under cowling.

Step 4: Check your battery

- Check battery connections, making sure they are tight and don't have visible signs of corrosion.
- Ensure your boat's battery is holding charge at the manufacturer's recommended voltage.

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- If it is due for replacement, make sure to dispose of it properly!
 - Contact your local mechanic or boat retailer and ask if they provide marine battery collection services. You can usually swap them wherever batteries are sold.

Step 5: Ensure steering system is operable BEFORE heading to the boat ramp!

- Check steering system by grabbing the wheel and checking for any excessive play when turning it, as this may indicate loose linkages in the steering system that need to be addressed.
- Do a full turn in both directions, to make sure everything is moving smoothly (identify any kinks and is not locking up).
- If it is seized, don't try and force it which might damage components.
- Check clamps/bolts that mount your motor onto the transom to ensure that nothing has come loose over the winter.

