

# SmartSkipper<sup>©</sup>

## Hurricane Season. Are you ready?

These tips are for informational purposes only and do not guarantee your property will not suffer damage. Most insurers insist on a Hurricane Preparedness Plan. Use yours as a checklist and follow the tips below.

If you are preparing your boat yourself allow plenty of time to get ready. If you pay someone to prepare your boat or you store for all or part of the Hurricane Season make sure the following ideas are used as a minimum.

You cannot over-protect your property.

- During Hurricane Season, June 1 to November 30, monitor weather reports **twice a day**. Storms can spring up unexpectedly.
- When a storm threatens, decide first where to put the boat. If possible, haul it out and block it carefully in a place where trees and other boats cannot fall onto it. You can purchase worldwide coverage to defray part of the cost from Offshore Risk Management ([www.offshorerisk.com](http://www.offshorerisk.com)).
- If you are close to a snug harbor with secure holding ground and you have several heavy anchors, you might want to move the boat there. Otherwise, study the layout of your marina. Tie your boat securely in the middle of the slip.
- Look at the exposed end of the harbor. Winds are generally easterly to northeasterly, although they may begin from the southeast.
- Turn your boat in the slip to face the storm winds and waves as much as possible. Set up spring lines to resist forces from the storm directions.
- Double the dock lines. One will remain if the other breaks or chafes through. Allow for an extremely high tide. Nylon twist lines are best for mooring or dock lines. They stretch much more than braid, take shock loads better and can be set up tightly to start with. The major problem with nylon is chafe. Put thick chafing gear on all lines. See below.
- Locals who rode out hurricanes in your area can advise you how much the water level may rise in your area. Storm surges can easily double, triple or quadruple normal high tides. Ask someone from Louisiana or the Florida Keys.
- Put chafing gear on all the dock lines. A garden hose slipped over the end of the rope, or leather or canvas wrapped around it where it goes through the deck chock or over a rub strip or coaming, will prevent the line from wearing through during the storm. Tape the chafe gear securely in place with duct tape or sew it in so it will not move. Chafe gear that moves out of a chock is useless. Chafe gear should extend a minimum of twelve inches past both sides of the chock.
- Tie the boat so that you can adjust the mooring lines from the dock. If the water level rises and the boat is bouncing about, you will not be able to get aboard to slack the lines so it can rise with the storm tide.
- Remove all canvas covers and loose items on deck and put them ashore or below deck. Take off bimini tops, sails, flags, boat hooks, outboard motors, barbecues, deck chairs and similar items and stow them.
- Pump the bilges dry and close all through-hull fittings except those that drain the cockpit.
- Put a bung in the engine exhaust.
- Shut off the fuel supply line.
- Shut off the propane supply line and ensure the tank cannot shift around.
- Secure loose batteries in their boxes so they cannot shift.
- Ensure boat batteries are fully charged.
- Ensure there are at least two large flashlights (torches) with fresh (current) batteries aboard.
- If possible, have a portable generator available with plenty of gas to keep your ship's batteries charged and maybe keep the beer cold.
- Remove any loose items, such as lamps, appliances, electronics, publications and cases, from the surfaces in the cabin and stow in a locker or ashore.
- After you have done everything possible for your own boat, check the ones around you, especially those to the east. Call the owners to let them know of the danger, if you can. If necessary, add dock lines to neglected vessels to protect your own. You may be annoyed at having to care for someone else's boat, but you are protecting your property by making the extra effort. Better safe than sorry.
- Always act and think as a *prudent uninsured*. This means; take care of your property as if you had no insurance. It should make you think twice about your preparations.