

DECOMMISSIONING

Sun, Heat and Humidity

Keeping things cool is just the beginning | BY FAY MARK

Many sailors these days aren't storing their boats in locations where the primary concern is protection against a mountain of snow and freezing temperatures. Instead they are leaving them in tropical locations, where conditions, although different, can produce just as much damage.

Storing our 54-foot cutter *New Morning* in the tropics involved many chores we would have done anywhere. But we took additional steps to protect the boat from the intense sun, increased humidity and excessive amounts of rainfall. Some locations are so humid you'll need electrical power for a dehumidifier or an air conditioner in order to combat mildew.

Our to-do list turned out to be extensive. Our first objective was to minimize exterior damage from UV radiation. Because the sun will bake all exterior surfac-

es, anything left on them may damage a paint or gelcoat finish.

Our secondary objective was to protect the interior and keep it from becoming a

petri dish for mold and mildew. When we return to the boat in a few months, we hope and expect there will be no unpleasant surprises, and that our recommissioning efforts will proceed quickly and smoothly.

Of course, we'll have another to-do list for that process. Meanwhile, here's our list of "must do" items to attend to when de-



Minimizing sun damage means covering the deck and hull surfaces with a strong protective coating. Check all jack stand positions and take photos in case there's an insurance claim

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commissioning a boat in the tropics.

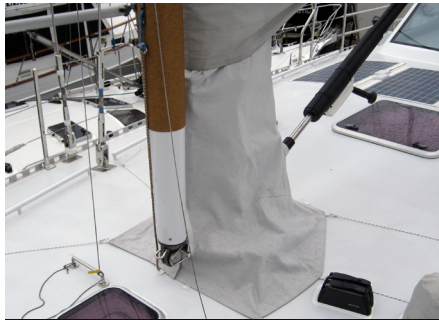
→ Although your boat can remain in the water if you like, most sailors prefer to haul out, which is what we did. After the boat has been hauled, pressure-wash the hull below the waterline and remove all barnacles and any other growth. Then wash the hull, deck, spars and standing rigging with fresh water.

→ Remove as much hardware as possible, then polish and lubricate it and store it below. Wash all miscellaneous gear such as fenders, Lifesling, etc., with fresh water and store below.

→ Apply a protective coating to hull, deck and spars. For gelcoat, Star brite Premium Marine Polish works well. Use a thin coat of Vaseline on stainless gear, including turnbuckles and shackles.

→ Remove and wash your sails, if possible. If not, cover them well. Remove all halyards and replace them with messenger lines. Wash all sheets and halyards.

→ To minimize mildew, carefully wipe down all interior surfaces, including headliners, ceilings, drawers, cabinets, floors and



Cover all winches and electronic displays and put sun reflectors inside all hatches and windows

appliances, with a 50-50 mix of water and white vinegar. White vinegar is very effective and environmentally friendly.

→ Place desiccants in all hanging lockers and any cabinet that contains (clean) folded clothes and bedding. Leave doors or lids open.

→ Flip up all cushions and mattresses so they will get good all-around ventilation. Remove some floorboards to keep the bilge ventilated.

→ Depending on the humidity levels, your budget and whether such a service is avail-

able, consider hiring an air-out service or installing an air-conditioner or de-humidifier that someone can operate on a reasonably consistent basis. A small dehumidifier draining into the galley sink is a worthwhile investment if you have a power supply.

→ Remove every item in the galley that is perishable or may be compromised by heat. Get rid of everything in cardboard containers and all materials that can absorb moisture, like powdered cleaners. Clean all appliances and utensils.

→ Check dates on all canned items and be

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Wash all lines and gear and remove food and containers that will absorb moisture

sure they will be current when you return.

→ Drain the refrigerator and freezer, and flush drain tubing (if present) out with fresh water to get rid of any small particles that might be trapped in the piping. Prop open the refrigerator and freezer lids.

→ Place sun reflectors inside all hatches—we use automotive windshield screens that we cut to fit. If you don't already have covers for them, do the same with all portlights. Don't secure these items with tape—the glue will adhere to the surface and make a mess.

→ Seal all vents and openings leading into the boat so as to keep out insects and rodents. Use trimmed wine corks to plug drains and cover all Dorade vents with mosquito netting.

→ Close all through-hulls except the one for the bilge pump. Put ant and roach traps in appropriate spaces.

→ If you have a watermaker, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions with regard to laying it up and pickling the membrane.

→ Empty and then flush your holding tanks, toilets and vented loops with freshwater. Add a deodorizer to the holding tanks.

→ Empty your freshwater tanks (although some cruisers like to leave several gallons of water and a few tablespoons of chlorine in them).

→ Service the engine as needed. Change the oil and inspect all hoses and belts for signs of softening, cracking and/or bulging.

→ Bring all batteries up to full charge. Equalize wet-cell batteries and top up the electrolyte. Clean the battery tops. Arrange to have the batteries brought up to full

charge once a month.

→ Clean your inflatable tender, dry it, deflate it and stow it out of the sunlight. Follow your end-of-season protocol for storing your outboard engine. Empty all external gas tanks.

→ Top up your internal fuel tanks to prevent condensation, and treat the fuel with a biocide. If the tanks are above the engine, close the fuel line shutoff valves.

→ Enable the date stamp on your camera and carefully photograph the boat. Take photos on deck and below and document how the boat is blocked up on its jack stands. This could be important if there is an insurance claim.

→ Make sure there are knowledgeable people who can check the boat at least once a week and will let you know immediately if something is wrong. *AL*



← Fay Mark and her partner Russ Irwin are circumnavigating aboard their 54ft cutter *New Morning*