**Spring Checklist**

 **For Boaters**

**Before You Launch**

 **(For vessels stored in water it is recommended to have your vessel hauled by a professional boat yard annually for hull and bottom maintenance)**

1. Inspect all around the hose clamps for rust and replace as necessary. Double clamp fuel lines and exhaust hoses with marine-rated stainless steel hose clamps. While not technically required, it’s wise to double clamp whenever possible on all hoses − especially those below the waterline.
2. Inspect all hoses for stiffness, rot, leaks and cracking, and replace any that are faulty. Make sure they fit snugly.
3. Inspect prop(s) for dings, pitting and distortion. Make sure cotter pins are secure.
4. Grip the prop (on inboard drive systems) and try moving the shaft up and down and side to side. If it’s loose and can be wiggled, the cutless bearing may need to be replaced.
5. Check the rudderstock to ensure it hasn’t been bent. Operate the wheel or tiller to ensure the steering works correctly. Check the rudder bearing for unusual play or movement.
6. Inspect the hull for blisters, distortions and stress cracks.
7. Make sure your engine intake sea strainer (if equipped) is not cracked or bent and is free of corrosion, clean and properly secured.
8. With inboards, check the engine shaft and rudder stuffing boxes for correct adjustment. A stuffing box should leak no more than two or three drops each minute when the prop shaft is turning. Check the shaft log hose for deterioration and rusty hose clamps.
9. Inspect, lubricate and exercise seacocks.
10. Use a garden hose to check for deck leaks at ports and hatches. Renew caulk or gaskets as necessary.
11. Inspect and test the bilge pump and float switch to make sure they’re both working properly. Also inspect the pump’s hose.
12. Check stove and remote LPG tanks for loose fittings, leaking hoses and properly functioning shutoff systems. Use the pressure gauge to conduct a leak down test to check for system leaks.
13. Inspect dock and anchor lines for chafe and wear.
14. If equipped, ensure that the stern drain plug is installed.
15. After the boat is launched, be sure to check all thru-hulls for leaks.

**Engines and Fuel Systems**

1. Inspect fuel lines, including fuel tank fill and vent hoses, for softness, brittleness or cracking. Check all joints for leaks, and make sure all lines are well supported with noncombustible clips or straps with smooth edges.
2. Inspect fuel tanks, fuel pumps and filters for leaks. Ensure portable tanks and lines are completely drained of stale fuel before filling with fresh fuel. Clean or replace fuel filters and/or fuel-water separators if not done before winterization.
3. Every few years, remove and inspect exhaust manifolds and risers for corrosion (for inboard-powered and inboard/outboard boats).
4. Charge battery.
5. Clean and tighten electrical connections, especially both ends of battery cables. Use a wire brush to clean battery terminals, and top off cells with distilled water (if applicable).
6. Inspect the bilge ventilation intake and blower ducting for damage or leaks and run the blower to confirm correct operation.
7. Test engine warnings and alarms.

**Engine Outdrives and Outboards**

1. Inspect rubber outdrive bellows for cracked, dried and/or deteriorated spots (look especially in the folds) and replace if suspect.
2. Check power steering and power trim oil levels.
3. [Replace anodes/zincs](https://youtu.be/hLbgmJAcGX8) that are more than half wasted.
4. Inspect the outer jacket of control cables. Cracks or swelling indicate corrosion and mean that the cable must be replaced.
5. [Inspect lower unit oil level and top off as necessary](https://youtu.be/oM5L8hSW3ns).

**Sailboat Rigging**

1. Inspect swage fittings for cracks and heavy rust (some discoloration is acceptable). Inspect wire halyards and running backstays for “fishhooks” and rust.
2. Remove tape on turnbuckles and lubricate threads, preferably with Teflon. Replace old tape with fresh tape, and ensure that water is able to freely drain from it.
3. If you suspect the core around a chainplate is damp, remove the chainplate to inspect and make repairs.

**Trailers**

1. Inspect tire treads and sidewalls for cracks or lack of tread and replace as necessary. Check air pressure; don’t forget the spare.
2. Inspect wheel bearings and repack as necessary.
3. Test all lights and replace any broken bulbs or lenses.
4. Inspect winch to make sure it’s working properly. Inspect hitch chains.
5. Inspect trailer frame and axel(s) for rust. Sand and paint to prevent further deterioration.
6. Inspect brakes and brake fluid reservoir.

**Safety**

1. Ensure your engine cut-off switch is working properly, and the lanyard is in serviceable condition.
2. Check expiration dates on flares.
3. Inspect fire extinguishers. Replace if more than 12 years from the date of manufacture or if age is unknown. More than 40 million Kidde extinguishers with plastic handles [were recalled](https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2017/kidde-recalls-fire-extinguishers-with-plastic-handles-due-to-failure-to-discharge-and) on Nov. 2, 2017.
4. Ensure you have properly sized and wearable life jackets in good condition for each passenger, including kids. Check inflatable life jacket cylinders and dissolvable “pill” bobbins in auto-inflating models.
5. Test smoke, carbon monoxide, fume and bilge alarms.
6. Check running lights for operation and spare bulb inventory.
7. [Update paper charts and chartplotter software](https://www.boatus.com/expert-advice/expert-advice-archive/2019/april/have-you-updated-your-chartplotter-software).
8. Replenish first-aid kit items that may have been used last season or are expired.
9. Check the operation of VHF radio(s) and that the MMSI number is correctly programed.
10. Get a free vessel safety check from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadrons. Find out more at [cgaux.org/vsc](http://cgaux.org/vsc/).
11. With Covid still around, it’s a good idea to keep sanitizer and spare masks aboard. And don’t forget to follow social distancing guidelines in the yard or marina while prepping.

**For the Dock**

1. In addition to checking its entire length for wear or abrasions, check both ends of the shore power cable connections, as well as the shore power receptacle on the boat, for burns, which indicate the cable and/or boat’s shore power inlet or the dock’s receptacle must be replaced.
2. Test ground-fault protection on your boat and private dock, and know how to prevent Electric Shock Drowning.

**The Paperwork**

1. Make sure your boat registration is up to date. Don’t forget your boat trailer tags.
2. Review your boat insurance policy and update coverage if needed. .
3. Provide a copy to your marina or club.

**(A certified Marine Surveyor can assist with above to prepare your vessel for a safe and enjoyable boating season.)**