

# Home & Garden

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## Weathering the storm - tips for preparing boats, yachts for hurricane season

**CLEARWATER** – Hurricane season is here and coastal residents are busy preparing their homes and property to weather any storms which come their way.

Because they're often already on the water, boats and yachts can be especially vulnerable to storm and hurricane damage – if they aren't properly prepared. MarineMax, the nation's largest boating and yachting retailer, has tips for boat owners to help protect boats and yachts from excessive damage during hurricanes and other storms.

"We take hurricane preparation very seriously," says Glen Sandridge, Vice President at MarineMax. "Hurricanes can be exceptionally destructive, but luckily boats, by design, are capable of withstanding the harshest of conditions. However, boat owners still need to be cautious and take steps to prevent damage during hurricanes."

If there is enough advanced warning, moving boats out of the water and out of the storm's path is the best possible way to avoid damage. Unfortunately, this often isn't an option. When it's not, MarineMax offers the following tips to prevent and minimize damage to boats and yachts:

\* When possible, store boats out of the water on land or on a lift to protect them from dangerous storm surges. If the boat is on a lift, tether the bow and stern to the lift itself so that high water will not float it off the lift. Placing

an anchor from the boat on the lift to nearby land can also be effective in the event the lift becomes damaged.

\* Remove all canvas and boat covers if possible and secure below or store elsewhere. Canvas, at best, can withstand winds up to approximately 70 miles per hour and flapping canvas can damage the Gel-Coat.

\* When docked, double or triple-line boats, allowing them to move with the water but keeping them tight enough to prevent the vessel from slamming against stationary poles and docks – this is traditionally the cause of most boat damage.

\* Duct tape vertical windows to prevent water from entering the boat. Then tighten down the hatches. If possible, duct tape engine room vents to prevent rain intrusion.

\* Position fenders where they will best protect the hull from surrounding stationary objects. The boat will rise and fall with changing water levels and adjusting fenders will be impossible. Position the fenders on the stationary objects such as pilings or docks that pose a constant threat to the hull.

\* Be sure boats are properly insured, and have all insurance documentation handy in case of damage. Photograph and/or videotape boats and yachts for use as additional property documentation. Photograph and/or videotape boats and yachts after they are secured as proof that prudent and reasonable care was taken to protect the property. If

possible, also take pictures of neighboring boats to document how they were secured.

\* Remove all portable electronics, valuables and any items that could potentially be damaged. Remove and secure loose items such as seat cushions, throwable cushions and boat hooks that could potentially cause damage.

\* Clean out lockers and refrigerators of perishable foods and take those items with you.

\* As a last item, do not lock the boat or yacht. After a storm authorities will secure the area and check buildings and boats for people and will break down all locked doors to complete a thorough sweep. Thieves will get into a boat anyway if they are looking for valuables. Leaving doors unlocked for authorities can reduce further damage.

Once the storm subsides and damage is assessed, prepare a checklist that you will have available every hurricane season. Make notes of what created or added to damage and what preventative measures could have been taken.

"Complacency is the primary culprit when it comes to storm damage," notes Sandridge. "Taking every opportunity to prepare and brace your vessel will go a great distance towards helping to insure the safety of your vessel."

For more information on hurricane preparation, call your local MarineMax dealership or visit [www.marinemax.com](http://www.marinemax.com).

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