

Tips from the Crew

Heads'l Tension:

"Roller furling units are fairly standard on sailboats today," says Alan Huth, Service Manager at Brewer Yacht Haven Marina. Therefore, it's important for sailors to pay specific attention to headsails, even in season, after they have been raised, furled, and put to use. "Since halyards stretch out over time, they need to be re-tensioned periodically. This is critical for performance, as well as for prevention," says Alan. "A loose genoa halyard is far more likely to jam or wrap at the masthead, when the sail is being furled, than a halyard that is under tension. To properly adjust a halyard, jibs and genoas should be gradually retightened while under sail." A visual check of the masthead for signs of wrapping while furling a heads'l should be a regular habit. If wrapping seems to be a problem, even after a halyard has been tensioned, you should talk with your yard rigger. A restrainer or a pennant may be needed.

Trim Tabs & Rack Storage:

If you dry dock your boat on racks for the summer, you should exercise caution with regard to your boat's trim tabs. "It is a boat owner's responsibility to leave trim tabs in the UP position when dropping a boat off for rack storage," says Fred



Sorrento, General Manager at Brewer Fiddler's Cove Marina. "This helps avoid damage, since rack stored boats are picked from behind by forklift." Damage to pistons can be costly. "Another option is to have auto-retractors installed," says Fred. "When the boat key is turned off, the trim tabs automatically go up, saving the boat owner the need to remember this detail every time he/she leaves the boat." Auto-retractors are not a significant investment. The parts total less than \$50, making installation of these units appealing.

According to Fred, it's a lot cheaper than forgetting the trim tabs in the down position, where they are vulnerable to being crushed by the forklift when the boat is hauled.

Snap & Zipper Care:

Snaps and zippers on canvas enclosures should be serviced annually. "If they aren't lubricated periodically, they get frustrating to deal with," says Bruce Symes, of Brewer Fiddler's Cove Marina. "Vaseline works fine as a lubricant, but Starbrite also makes a product specifically intended for this purpose. Applying a little bit of something to all moving parts and connections does the trick. It also limits damage often caused by people trying to pry corroded snaps and zippers apart." Note: when lubricating snaps and zippers, it's best to choose a non-sticky product; one that won't attract dirt!

Holding Tank Odors:

We all know this to be true: odors inevitably waft their way out of holding tanks. But, lingering odors can be minimized, if not totally eliminated. "First, visit pump out stations often to regularly flush out your holding tank," says Mike Sperzel, of Brewer Ferry Point Marina. "Second, never over-fill your tank! Over-filling can lead to a plugged vent. You should always be able to hear air moving into the tank, from the vent fitting, while pumping out. Third, don't let your tank sit with any content, for any period of time. Odors from any material left sitting, particularly in a system's hose line, will eventually permeate the atmosphere. And, fourth, always add an approved chemical treatment to the tank, to act as a deodorizer, after each pump out." If these steps don't do the trick, inquire with your yard's service technicians about installing a filter in the vent line; filters are designed to assist with odor elimination.

Impacting

Urgent! Over the last year and several months, a long, evolving conversation among fuel suppliers, engine manufacturers, boat dealers, marine service technicians, and boat owners has quietly been taking place. This conversation has been full of concern, inquiry, and speculation regarding the effects of a new ethanol-based fuel on inboard gasoline engines and both new and old outboard two-stroke engines. This on-going conversation appears to be the direct result of a newly mandated fuel reformulation law that took effect in January 2004 in both New York and Connecticut. This law dictates that all gasoline sold in these states be comprised of 10% ethanol. This ethanol additive, an alcohol derived from corn, acts as the primary fuel oxygenator, in place of MTBE, which has been linked to groundwater contamination. Though both additives are known to reduce emissions, MTBE is being phased out, in favor of ethanol, as a result of federal and state efforts. As of this year, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have joined New York and Connecticut in implementing these same new fuel standards. Other states, including Maine, will likely follow suit.

On the surface, this changeover seems good. Ethanol is a very high octane, clean-burning additive which can absorb small amounts of water and even clean out fuel systems. It appears to greatly benefit automobiles, but the effects are not proving to be as positive when introduced to the marine environment.

Here are some marine related ethanol fuel issues encountered in recent months:

- Some, older fiberglass fuel tanks have slowly been dissolved by the alcohol-based fuel, resulting in tank degradation and failure. The potential for leakage and explosion creates a serious safety hazard! Since changes were made to fiberglass resin formulas in the mid 1980s, the concern is for fuel tanks made prior to this timeframe.
- A chemical reaction between older fiberglass resins and plasticizers and the 10% concentration of ethanol in gasoline is causing a reaction when the fuel enters intake manifolds, creating a tar-like substance that causes intake valves to stick and push rods to bend, often destroying engines.