

Calling all Marinas, Yards and Repair/Rework Facilities...

A Pre-launch Checklist; Things to Consider

By Ed Sherman, ABYC Curriculum Developer and Senior Instructor

By the time you read this, the spring launch season will be in full swing. It's a busy time of year and everyone at a boatyard is facing a series of tight deadlines to keep the launch cycle running as smoothly as possible.

The truth is, the checklist I'll present here is one that should have been delivered to your customers over the winter months, possibly with a financial incentive built in to entice customers to respond early so that billable work can be completed *before* the frenzy that usually goes along with the spring launch cycle. So, if your yard is not presenting your customer base with a list like this in January, it's something you really should consider for the future: it can go a long way toward enhancing cash flow during the slower winter months because many of the tasks outlined here can actually be done over the winter and are billable as completed.

We can break the tasks down into four broad categories:

- Mechanical
- Rigging
- Hull (Cosmetic)
- Hull (Mechanical)

Under the mechanical category, we will of course have slightly different regimens depending upon whether the boat is powered by gas or diesel engines. Power vs. sail boats will have different lists as well.

It's important to remember whenever you are inspecting a customer's boat to approach whatever task you are involved in with wide peripheral vision. Make note of any obvious flaws, ABYC Standards non-compliance or potential problems. That's how you sell honest work and maintain good customer satisfaction. Let's look at the lists:



Steering quadrant – all cables should be adjusted and checked for any excessive wear.

Mechanical

Commission diesel engine:

Start engine, check for proper water/cooling raw water flow, check for fluid leaks, check for exhaust leaks and check belts, hoses and clamps. Inspect fuel system from deck fill to point of connection on engine(s). Inspect for engine paint chipping, neutralize rust and repaint as needed. Ensure engine pre-heat is operational if equipped.

Commission gasoline engine:

All of the above plus: Run engine diagnostic test sequence if computer controlled; sea trial for performance, proper running temperature, excessive vibration.

Gas and diesel: Oil and filter changed (should be part of de-commissioning), fuel filters replaced, water pump impeller(s) checked/replaced as needed. All engine and cooling system anodes replaced. Test engine coolant, replace as needed. Test batteries, top up electrolyte if applicable, ensure posts are covered and primary connection at starter motor and alternator are properly booted.

AC generator: All of the above for either gas or diesel, whichever is applicable.



Stuffing box – Stuffing boxes should be checked for excessive leakage. A slight drip is normal. Excessive dripping indicates either adjustment or repacking of the unit. A "normal" drip rate is often considered about 4-5 drops per minute. This should be checked as part of a sea trial.

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Engine cooling system anodes – These anodes are often hard to locate and therefore neglected. Failure to replace these in a timely fashion can cause serious damage to engine heat exchangers.



Sea cocks with double clamps – It's important to check for free movement and handle orientation to ensure full travel from opened to closed. Regarding double clamps, remember that the ABYC does not require this in H-27. In fact, if the barb on the thru-hull is not long enough to accommodate the full bandwidth of the clamps, double clamping can cause more harm than good.



Alternator and starter motor terminals – should be protected with insulating boots. NOT as shown here. Remember that the starter motor circuit is the only circuit on a boat that is not required to have a fuse installed. If a metal object contacts the terminal and the engine block simultaneously, a serious short circuit will occur, possibly causing an engine room fire.

General mechanical/electrical: Check bilge pump operation, commission potable water system, commission heads, commission refrigeration system(s), commission air conditioning systems, service all sea cocks, install running gear anodes. Install outdrive(s) if applicable. Change drive oil. Change transmission oil. Clean, prep, outdrives as needed. Check and lubricate steering, throttle and shift controls. Test operation of all main panel board AC and DC circuits.


Rigging: Prepare mast for stepping, which includes: check lights, install spreaders and boots and inspect all standing rig fittings. Inspect windex and or masthead sensors. Wash and wax mast, Step mast, rig tune. Inspect all running rigging. Clean and lubricate all winches, test all line stoppers and turning blocks. Install sails.

Hull (cosmetic): Paint bottom, clean and wax hull, wash and clean topsides, remove shrink wrap and install canvas as needed. Paint boot top varnish or treat exterior wood. Clean, inflate, launch dinghy.

Hull mechanical: Align engine(s). Replace cutlass bearing. Repack stuffing box.

It's important to note that all of the above work will generally have either fixed pricing, or in some cases will be described as time and materials. A policy needs to be established and outlined on any service contract form that limits the extent of repairs a customer is responsible for without additional written authorization.

Also, remember that yard coordination is of paramount importance during this busy time. Make sure the whole team is working *in harmony*. There have been more than one boat launched over the years with hoses removed and sea cocks open... as the crew went to lunch. ■



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