

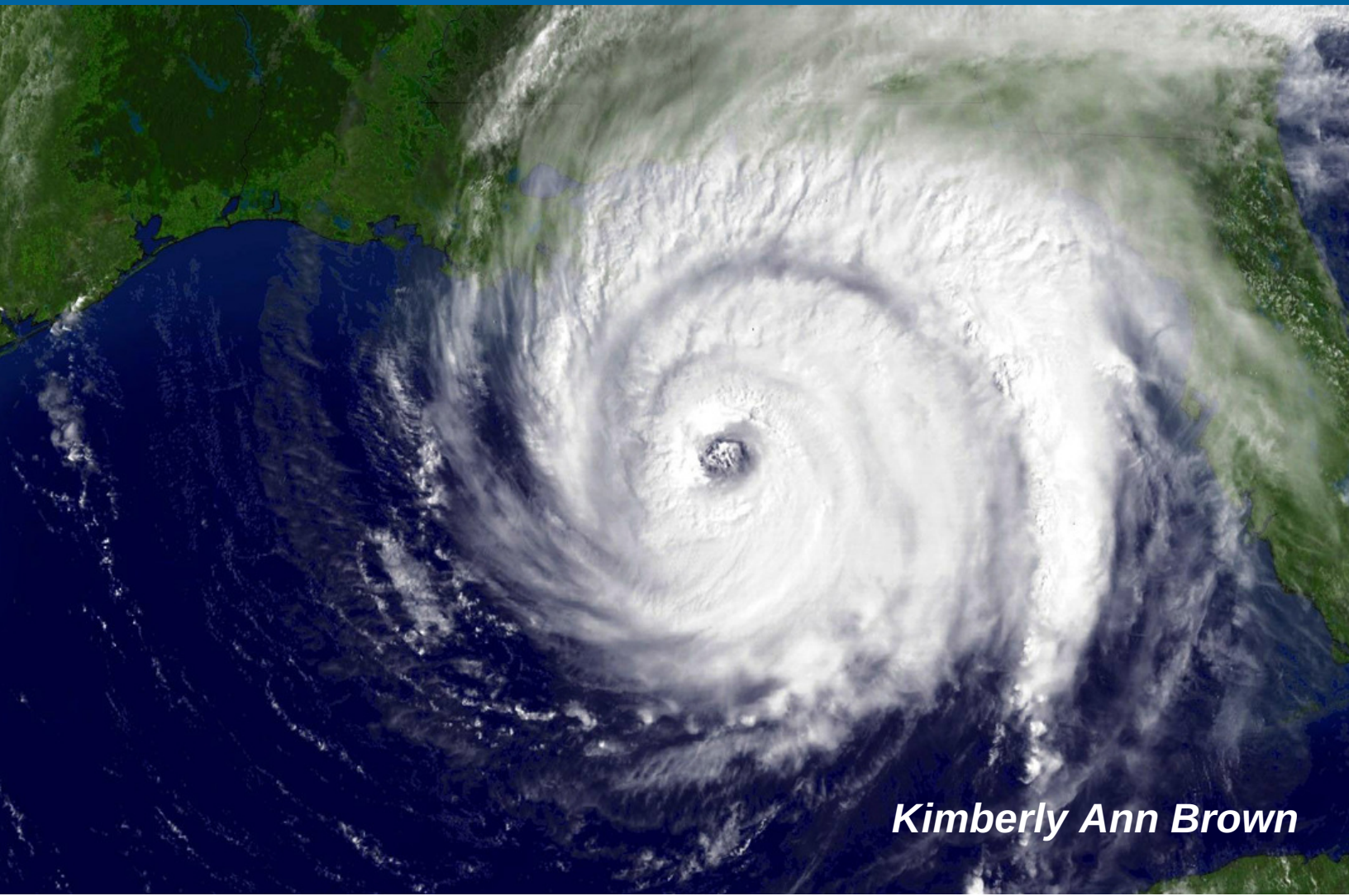
First Edition

THE BOAT SAFETY COLLECTION



Hurricane Preparedness

A checklist to help protect your boat



Kimberly Ann Brown

The Boat Safety Collection: Hurricane Preparedness

A checklist for a secure mooring

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1st Edition

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Preparing for a Hurricane, Typhoon or Cyclone

Hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones are all the same thing; we just use different names for them in different areas of the world. If you're ever going to be in an area where these type of strong storms have hit in the past, it's imperative to create a plan before the storm is on the radar.

Hands down the best advice you can get is from local sailors that have survived previous storms. In some areas the best option is to find a hurricane hole, or designated area known for protection during a storm. In other areas it might be best to travel inland up a river, raft up with several boats along a mangrove patch or tie onto a dock with solid pilings.

Thus far our boat has been through one tropical storm and one Category 2 hurricane. During the tropical storm we prepared the boat and stayed with her in a marina. For the Category 2 hurricane, we moved her inland as far up a river as we could, anchored her and left the boat behind while we drove to safer grounds. In both occasions we had no damage. Unfortunately the same could not be said for other boats in are area that did not properly prepare.

The objective of using this Hurricane Preparedness guide are as follows:

- Understand what to do well before a hurricane is forecasted
- Learn how to prepare your boat, whether it's in a marina, at a dock or anchored and the supplies required
- Discover what to do before you leave the boat (if leaving the boat) and what to do if staying on the boat through the storm

Pre-planning for hurricanes: Page 1 of 4

- ❑ Create a folder labeled hurricane preparedness and start collecting information to form a plan. While gathering data, consider the worst-case possibility. In some cases the worst case might be that you have to stay on the boat because there's nowhere else you can go OR the worst case might be that you have to leave your boat and travel to a location outside the storms reach.

- ❑ Create an inventory, perhaps an excel list, of everything valuable on your boat. Take pictures and videos. Make a note of what will remain on the boat versus items that can be taken off and stored at a friend's house, storage unit or even in a car.

- ❑ Make a list of what needs to be removed from the boat before a hurricane hits – consider valuable, sentimental and practical items.

- ❑ Read your tropical storm clauses in your insurance policy to understand your coverage (it might impact what you leave on and/or take off the boat prior to a hurricane hitting). It might also make an impact on what you do with your boat. Some insurance companies serve penalties if you're in a hurricane zone during hurricane season. Also insurance companies may not fully cover you when staying in a marina if the marina is inadequate to weather a hurricane.

- ❑ Make sure your boat papers are up-to-date, in a folder and ready to take with you when you leave the boat.

Pre-planning for hurricanes: Page 2 of 4

- (Continued)... Boat papers may include: boat registration, equipment inventory, lease agreement with the marina/boatyard, a picture of the boat (can be used if your boat goes missing), tax certification, copies of any cruising permits, copies of passports/ID cards, insurance policy with claim phone number and the phone number of the coast guard and/or harbor master.

- Test your bilge pump if you don't routinely do so already. If it's not working, get it serviced immediately.

- Make sure your anchor(s), chain size and length is sufficient for your size and weight of boat in hurricane conditions. If it's not sufficient be prepared to get what is required.

- Consider getting back-up batteries. How long will your boat last without electricity or running the engine/generator? How long will the batteries last if the bilge is running continuously? (Just something to think about).

- Well before hurricane season hits seek out knowledge from locals. Whether you're anchored in a bay or have your boat in a marina talk to neighbors. The consensus might be that it's safer to anchor up a river, find a sheltered bay as far inland as possible, or have the boat taken out of the water and tied down on land. Questions to ask:
 - Have hurricanes hit this area before and if so, what was the level of destruction?

Pre-planning for hurricanes: Page 3 of 4

- (Continued)... Are there known spots that boaters go to anchor in the event of an oncoming tropical storm or hurricane?

- Are there services available to have a boat hauled out and secured? If so, what is their name and contact details?

- Where is the evacuation route and where are locals instructed to go?

- Where is closest public transport on an evacuation route?

- Is there any advice you can give me on preparing a plan for my boat to survive a hurricane?

If your boat is currently in a marina ask the following:

- Does the marina have a mandatory evacuation clause? In many cases, marinas will force boat owners to move the boat out of the marina to find an anchorage.

- If there is a mandatory evacuation clause, where does the marina suggest you anchor the boat?

- Does the marina provide a service to help boat owners anchor outside the marina?

- At what storm strength are berth holders requested to move the boat?
Category one hurricane or higher?

Pre-planning for hurricanes: Page 4 of 4

- How much notice will be given before an evacuation plan is put into effect?

- Does the marina have a lift out and secure service? What are the details?

- Has the marina survived previous storms? If yes, how bad was the storm and what damage was there? If the marina did not survive a previous storm, did any marina's in the area stay intact, and if so, why?

- What if you can't get to the boat in time to move it? Is it worth having a local contact that can move the boat for you? Does the marina provide that kind of service?

- Does the marina have any requirements for hurricane preparation when deciding to keep the boat in the marina berth?

If your boat is in an anchorage:

- Determine the closest hurricane hole, marina, safest bay or option for haul out (if a hurricane proof storage option is available). Ask around other boats in the bay or talk to locals.

- Find out if there's a live aboard radio syndicate. Many bays and areas common to live aboards will have a 9:00am VHF discussion about a variety of things. Make sure to ask if there's a hurricane procedure in place and whom is best to talk to about it.

Preparing the boat for an imminent hurricane: Page 1 of 3

- Remove everything that is not permanently attached to the boat – sails, lines, canvas, cushions, bimini, dodger/sprayhood, flags, paserelle, safety equipment, radar reflectors, radar, electronics, furling units, etc.

- If you decide to keep your sails up, wrap your jib sheets around the jib to secure the sail as much as possible. If your jib is not perfectly wound, with only the tiniest bit of material sticking out, it will rip. Instead of using the sheets you can also use zip ties. For the mainsail, if covered along the boom, use sail ties to secure it to the boom.

- It's worth removing external navigation plotters even if you have to unscrew them – water has the potential to get inside everything. Failing that, use the thickest garbage bag and strongest tape to cover whole units.

- Tie down anything that has the possibility for moving around or being blown off the boat – tiller, wheel and boom. Make sure tiller is tied in a central position – not to one side or the other. Tape your halyards to the mast to prevent them from unraveling, and/or swinging and banging against the mast.

- Cover and tape all navigational instruments.

- Remove all vent cowls and heavily tape over the openings or cover with garbage bags and tape. Cover any vents in your companionway.

- Cover engine room vents to prevent water blowing in.

Preparing the boat for an imminent hurricane: Page 2 of 3

- Use a cork or a child's plastic inflatable ball to insert into the boat's exhaust pipe. This is to prevent water from blowing into the engine.

- Shut off all seacocks except for bilge outlet. Close seawater intake stopcocks. Make a note of what you close so you remember to open them back up on when you return to your boat.

- Stow anything and everything below that can move. Move breakables to low positions on the boat, tape up any cupboards that have the propensity to open.

- Strip beds and turn up mattresses so they won't get soaked if a window breaks open.

- Use duct tape around all windows, hatches and seams.

- Close any watertight bulkheads.

- If anchoring, prepare an anchor snubber with chaffing guards where the snubber lines exit the boat.

- Make sure the batteries are fully charged and turn off everything other than the bilge pump.

Preparing the boat for an imminent hurricane: Page 3 of 3

If in a marina do the above and the following:

- Make sure boat and dock cleats are solid. Tighten if necessary or find alternatives to tie down the boat. Use all available cleats in as many directions as possible.

- Double all lines and make sure your lines are in excellent condition. Do not use chaffed or damaged lines.

- Set up crossing spring lines forward and aft.

- Attach lines high on tidal pilings to allow for storm surge and make sure they can't slip off.

- Cover all lines that are liable to suffer chaffing - use plastic hosing, wrap with tape or use leather at rough points.

- Put out as many fenders as possible. Make sure the fenders won't pop up leaving the hull unprotected – perhaps tie something heavy below the fender to keep weight on it. Consider putting a fender board against the pier or on the pilings.

- Consider putting an anchor out if the marina suggests it or if it makes sense to do so.

Preparing to leave the boat before the hurricane strikes: 1 of 2

- Turn off everything except the automated bilge (and anchor light if anchored).
- Remove anything valuable if you haven't already done so.
- Remember your boat papers and documents.
- Take pictures and/or video of boat and all the preparations provided to make the boat as secure as possible.

If at a marina

- Disconnect shore power.
- Grab the phone number of anyone that has decided to stay on his or her boat during the storm (not something I suggest but some people do it). By having a boat owner's number you might be able to get updates about the storm, condition of the marina and your boat.

If moving to a safe anchorage

- Look for an area that is most protected by hills, trees and land. If there are mangroves and your draft allows, get the bow right up into the mangrove. Tie off the bow on the mangrove roots and walk in an anchor. Put out stern anchors and tighten by using your winches.
- Consider what the boat will run into if it drags. It's better to run into mangroves or mud rather than hit bottom and tip over.

Preparing to leave the boat before the hurricane strikes: 2 of 2

- ❑ Use a scope of 10:1 if possible.

- ❑ There are differing thoughts as to the best way to anchor in a hurricane. Seek local knowledge! You can put out three anchors – one into the wind and two to either side or put two anchors on one rode – the heaviest at the end and the next closer into the boat. The way you anchor can depend on whether you're in tidal waters and perhaps the quadrant of the hurricane that will be hitting you.

- ❑ Use a snubber or line to remove the pressure off the anchor chain from the winch. Make sure to use chaffing guards on the lines where they exit and rub on the boat.

Staying on the boat while anchored: Page 1 of 1

- If time permits make sure you have a full tank of fuel. Using your engine during a storm may relieve pressure on the anchor (if in a position to do so)

- Ensure that you have enough food, water and gas to last for several days. Although a hurricane may come and go in a day it could take several days and even weeks for an area to recover

- Notify family and/or friends of your location and plans

- Attach jack lines. If something breaks or comes loose on the foredeck you'll want to attach yourself to the jack lines

- Have tethers and lifejackets out and ready

- Have your EPIRB nearby

- Tie dinghy securely to davits or float behind the boat. Note: if the dinghy fills with water it's not necessarily a bad thing. The weight of the water will potentially keep the dinghy from flying away.

Hurricane preparedness supplies: Page 1 of 1

- Duct tape and/or heavy duty tape
- Zip ties
- Plastic garbage bags - the thicker the better.
- Anti-chaffing gear (hose, leather, etc.)
- Rope for tying things down (don't use anything that already has chaffing)
- Plywood (to cover vents)
- Warps for hurricanes (should be ¼" larger than normal sized warps and without any chaffing)
- Appropriate sized and length anchor chain
- Backup anchor(s)
- Anchor rode
- Snubber
- Plugs for exhaust pipes (cork, wood bung, inflatable)
- Extra batteries to keep the boat and bilge powered
- Extra fenders and warps

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If you have any suggestions, additions or improvements to this checklist please email them to me at: [Kim@SailingBritican.com](mailto:Kim@SailingBritican.com) and I'll add them to future updates.

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Extra Resources

- Watch my YouTube video: *Preparing our Boat for a Hurricane* here:
<https://youtu.be/tqLXvHBPJOU>
- For more extensive information for hurricane preparation, consider reading this:
<http://www.yachtsurvey.com/hurricane.htm#Moorings%20Versus%20Docks>