

Safety at Sea

by Richard Bateson, Safety Officer

Safe, enjoyable boating is what BIBOA is all about

With the season about to start, it's time to look at the RIB and see what jobs are needed before that first launch!

Trailer

- ◆ Carry out a **visual inspection** and look for any signs of wear and cracks to the chassis.
- ◆ Couple the trailer to the car and **test the brakes** to make sure they haven't seized. The **bearings** may need replacing. Much better to do this now than on the motorway.
- ◆ Check the **winch mechanism**: ensure that it operates freely and that the winch cable is in good condition.
- ◆ Check the operation of the **light board support bars**: make sure they move freely and check the **light board, cables and connections** are in good condition: ensure that all the lights work and that you have spare bulbs. A spare light lens is also a good idea.
- ◆ Check all **tyres** for both condition and pressure. Don't forget the spare!
- ◆ Locate the **jack**, just in case!

Boat & Equipment

- ◆ Check the **hull** for any signs of damage to the gel coat, consider repairs when the temperature is warm enough.
- ◆ Check the **tubes**: all tapes in good order and no sign of wear. Again, carry out remedial work as necessary. Don't forget to locate your **emergency repair kit**. Is the glue still in good order? Have you got any Hypalon for those larger repairs?
- ◆ Check the **engine securing bolts** and operation of the **tilt mechanism**. Are there any hydraulic leaks to the system? Don't forget to check the **steering system**. Does it all work OK? Operate lock-to-lock to test. If you have a cable system, are all the connections in good order? Does the cable need replacing? Is the nut behind the wheel loose!!
- ◆ Check all **seat mountings**. Are they secure and is there any sign of crazing to the gel coat at this point? This could be the first sign of an impending structural failure.
- ◆ If you winterised correctly at the end of the season, all the **electrical systems** will be protected with silicon or similar but if there is lots of corrosion, you have some work to do. Clean off all terminals, re-grease and reassemble. Don't forget the **battery**. It's probably protected in a nice warm garage having had a gentle trickle charge throughout the winter but if not, check the electrolyte levels with a hydrometer, top up and recharge as necessary. If it is a sealed for life battery, check that the test light is showing that it is in good working order and is holding charge. Test it for operation before you launch the boat!
- ◆ Check your **navigation lights** are working properly: replace bulbs and clean terminals as necessary.
- ◆ Inspect your **drysuit**: check the zips for ease of operation and if necessary treat with a suitable cleaning and lubricating agent.
- ◆ Unpack the **flare box** and check that they are all in date and reject any that show any signs of undue damage or wear. Old flares must be disposed of responsibly—try your local fire station, chandlery or the Coastguard.
- ◆ Check the **anchor line** for wear and tear and replace as necessary.
- ◆ Test your **VHF radio** and recharge any portables. Remember that Solent Coastguard prefer channel 67 for radio checks.
- ◆ Test your **bilge pump** and make sure that the filters are clear.
- ◆ For **inboard diesels**, don't forget the fuel filters: replace the filter elements and watch out for any signs of black sticky material in the filters as this will indicate that you have picked up the diesel bug and the full system will need to be treated.
- ◆ Check your **propeller**: make sure the drive shaft splines are in good condition, as are the securing nut and washer. Also, look for signs of wear on the thrust washer.
- ◆ Check your **lifejackets**: if they are the auto-inflation type, make sure the cylinders are in date and that there are no signs of salt in between the jacket and the cylinder as this may prevent its removal. Inflate each jacket to make sure there are no leaks.
- ◆ Check your **tool kit** and make sure everything is back in the box following your DIY work in the house over the winter.

It's also an ideal time to check paperwork - SSR, insurance and radio licences, as well as ICC if you're planning a trip abroad. Charts (both paper and electronic) and almanac should be up to date and corrected where necessary.

There is advice everywhere, and the internet provides us with a wealth of suggestions on pre-season checklists. This page gives a RIB-biased view on the situation and should assist you in having a trouble-free season. Whilst it won't be the exact procedure for your RIB, it should work as a set of suggestions to help you plan your RIB maintenance.