



LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

Outboard Motor Maintenance

Whether you are considering or have already purchased a boat with an outboard motor, there are some basic maintenance procedures that you should keep in mind. These practices will keep your boat in good working condition and save you a great deal of inconvenience later on down the road.

Boats are expensive to buy and can be just as expensive to repair. This is especially true when talking about outboard motors. By taking a few minutes to perform regular maintenance, you can avoid breakdowns that can cost a tremendous amount of time and money. Before the season starts, you or a mechanic should give your outboard a full tune-up. A full tune-up from a mechanic should include a compression test, checking the water pump seals and pressure testing the lower unit.

If you wish to conduct the annual tune-up yourself, there are several things you should do and look for. Change the engine and gear oil. Check for water in your old oil; if water is detected, the prop shaft, shift rod and drive shaft seals should be changed. The power head should also be checked. For this, you will need to check the wires for corrosion, inspect sparkplugs, check aging on fuel lines and make sure all fasteners and connections are tight.

Along with the pre-season tune-up, you should take preventive measures during the season to keep your boat working properly. It is a lot cheaper to catch and fix an issue during maintenance than to fix several damaged parts from a part breaking during use. Make sure that you know how to operate your outboard motor correctly, and develop a regular maintenance schedule. When it comes to maintenance, many people focus too much on changing the oil. Just as important, they should be worrying about keeping their cooling system in good shape. Often, engine damage comes from poor maintenance of the cooling system.

Consider flushing out your engine after every use. To flush out the engine, you will need a set of "rabbit ears," which consist of two rubber seals connected with a metal clamp. The device should be connected to the lower unit (this is where the water is picked up) and then attached to a garden hose. Next, start the engine, and the water pump will get all the water out of the outboard.

While the water is being pumped out of the outboard, you should check to make sure the outflow is strong. If the output is weak, that means there might be an issue - possibly a blocked outflow tube. To check for this problem, take a small piece of wire (or something similar) and insert it into the flow tube. Move it back and forth to try and dislodge what debris might be in there. After you do this, start the engine again. If the weak output continues to occur, you may need a new water pump.

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Once the pump is completely flushed out, disconnect the fuel line from the carburetor. Turn the engine on and let it run until it is out of gas. Every time you use your boat, you should be using fresh fuel that is no more than 60 days old. This practice will help prevent a buildup of grime on the engine. The build-up of grime will cause the engine to be hard to start. When the gas has been used up, shut everything on the boat off. At this time, you should remove the cowling from the engine and check for cracks or leaks. Once everything has been drained, flushed and checked, the motor should be wiped down with high-quality, water-resistant grease.

Boats can bring a great deal of fun and excitement to a family, but they can also be very costly. Whether you already own a boat, or are considering buying one, make sure that you know how to keep your boat in the best working condition possible. If you take a few minutes after every use to flush your motor out, check for possible problems and conduct annual tune-ups to your outboard engine, you can save yourself hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. It is a lot easier and cheaper to fix one problem now, before it breaks completely, than to replace several broken parts later.

For more information, consider contacting a local boat dealer or visiting the following:

- www.boattalk.com/
- www.recalls.gov/
- www.brokeboats.com/



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