



PHOTOS COURTESY BILL DALTON/APEX MARINE

TIME & MONEY

Every marina

and boatyard has stories of boats on a “Deferred Maintenance Program (DMP).” Rather than a service contract, the high-sounding phrase is a bit of sarcasm usually associated with unpleasant results. The mantra of DMP practitioners is “never do today what you can put off until tomorrow.” Though popular, this course of inaction isn’t prudent. Not just

because tomorrow never comes, but, because it will eventually take your boat out of service, and the money required to render it once again seaworthy will be much greater than if you adhered to the opposite philosophy of, “A Stitch in Time.” For nearly two decades, Bill Dalton, now vice president of service at Apex Marine on Fort Lauderdale’s New River, has catalogued the results of even passively pursued DMPs.

Sometimes things can go wrong because boat owners are unfamiliar with terminology or cause and effect. For instance: Your diver reports that your props have “cavitation burns.” Hmmm. Ignore that and your blades could break off at speed. If that happens, hope they will be spun down into the water and not up and into, or through, the hull. Bill says that the simple fix for the malady is to “lay a weld over the burns and do a little reshaping of the front side of the propeller.” Take the experts’ advice; ask a question; that’s why you are paying them.

Although boat engines may look similar to those in our cars, they are asked to function in a hostile environment. As such they require a bit more attention to the details.

The owner of 29 Tiara with Crusader engines didn’t follow the factory recommendation.

When it comes to maintenance it seems owners follow one of two approaches, one highly recommended, the other . . .
. . . not so much.

By BILL ANDO

Clockwise, from bottom opposite: Signs of risers leaking sea water into cylinders; blister signals water has penetrated the gelcoat; a diver's photo of a prop cavitation burn found during cleaning; this piston is beyond ring replacement; this running gear will have a serious impact on performance; a raw water strainer that doesn't.



A 74-foot Hatteras sat idle for just over three years with minimal diver attention and maximum DMP. The zincs were in fair shape, as the diver had been keeping up with them, but all of the boat's thru-hull fittings were almost completely clogged. The boat limped

Along with the regular maintenance items, the manufacturer recommends that the exhaust risers be pulled and checked for corrosion and the condition of the mating surfaces at least every three years. After four years on the DMP, the boat's owner was surprised when the starboard engine didn't start. Hoping for a quick fix, he wasted dollars on a new battery and starter before calling Apex.

"When I went to the boat," Bill recalls, "I saw the telltale signs of rust between the riser and manifold, that any mechanic could have seen during regular maintenance." He pulled the spark plugs; two of them were solidly rusted. Uh oh. Bill discovered that the risers had been slowly leaking exhaust water into the exhaust manifold.

"Once the engine shuts down, water finds its way into the cylinders where the exhaust valves are open and then the saltwater seizes the rings," he says. To make things worse, the boat was being listed for sale. "We pulled the engine out and installed a new long block." What would have been a \$1,250 repair became a \$10,000 engine replacement. Not using a boat doesn't mean that you needn't haul it.

into the yard at idle speed, its engines and generators overheated under load. The air conditioners, without adequate cooling water, were malfunctioning. When they hauled the boat they found massive growth and 800 weeping blisters.

Instead of a pressure wash and a bottom paint job costing \$3,500, the project began with a charge of \$3,300 just for scraping and grinding the bottom to assess the depth of the problem. The necessary fix? Remove all the bottom paint and grind out every blister then wash out those areas, let them dry, fill every hole with the proper lay up, followed by barrier coat then primer and bottom paint. "The job will likely cost approximately \$26,000. The blisters, if caught earlier during yearly bottom painting, would have been much smaller in size and quantity," he says. The moral of the story is that it's easy to fall into the rut of a Deferred Maintenance Program, but not so pleasant climbing out. Bill Dalton can be reached at apexmarinerepair.com. 🐛

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