

Don't treat your boat like a car

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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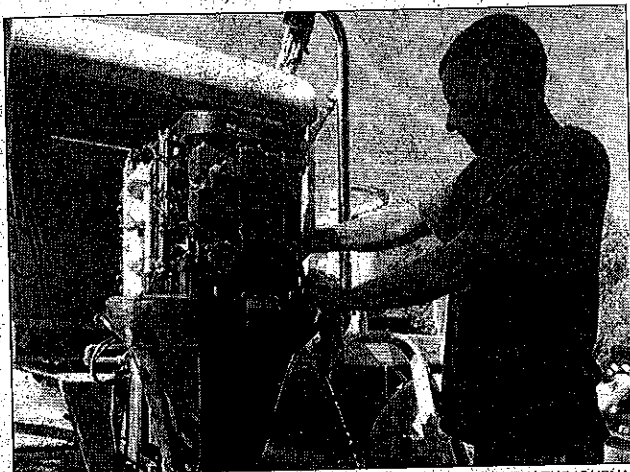
With the boating season in full swing, a lot of boaters are out on our area lakes enjoying the outdoors. Having a reliable, well-maintained watercraft is no accident. One of the biggest mistakes that even veteran boat owners often make is treating the vehicle they drive on the water the same way they treat the vehicle they drive on land.

It's a pretty common misconception, but although both vehicles may be bright and shiny (as well as costly in terms of monthly purchase payments), cars and boats are vastly different animals.

Here are a few dramatic details.

Fuel: Most gas stations today offer only ethanol-enhanced gasoline. Ethanol typically works fine in an automobile, primarily because of the consumption rate/turnover rate of fuel in an automobile is much faster.

Ethanol begins phase-separation in as little as 12 days. This means the alcohol separates from the petroleum mix when left undisturbed. The separated alcohol then begins to adsorb water, which can damage the engine if the motor is run after separation occurs. Many older model boats also are not equipped with alcohol resistant fuel system components and the alcohol breaks down the rubber and plastic



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Failing to properly maintain your watercraft will result in spending more time on the dock and less time in the water.

components.

Always make sure to use pure gasoline in your watercraft motor, especially one that will be left sitting for several days or weeks at a time.

Storage: Most automobile owners don't think twice about leaving their cars outside. Some cars never see the inside of a garage or storage building and it may take more than 10 years before fading or weathering starts to show.

Obviously not having a roof, boats tend to weather and fade up to 10 times faster than an automobile. Imagine leaving your convertible outside, with the top down, year round.

Ideally, storing your boat inside a building or under a roof covering will increase its life and prevent weathering and sun fading of the carpet and upholstery. Lacking this, a fitted sturdy cover will prevent exposure to the elements, but must also be maintained to re-

move water that puddles. Even a "lifetime" boat cover rarely lasts more than about 3 years.

Maintenance: You have your car serviced and the oil changed every 3,000 miles. Your boat may never see 3,000 miles on the water in a lifetime, but that doesn't mean you don't need to have it serviced regularly.

Most manufacturers recommend boats be serviced at least once a year. That means even if you didn't get the chance to use the boat but two or three times this summer, you still need to change the oil and service the motor.

Some boat motors, particularly inboard/outdrive models, also require seasonal maintenance before and after freezing weather.

Repairs: It's a fact of life that boat repairs take longer than car repairs. You might be able to schedule your car for a fuel pump repair and have it back the same

day. That's probably not going to happen with your watercraft.

Even a small town will have two or three auto parts stores. Most all boat/motor/trailer parts come from the original manufacturer, not a marine parts store. Few after-market parts are available for marine motors. Ordering and receiving manufacturer parts takes longer than automobile parts because most parts are shipped from the manufacturer.

Like auto parts stores, every small town will have two or three auto mechanics doing business. The availability of certified marine mechanics is much less. To make matters worse, most boat owners wait until only a few days before they need their boat to schedule service or repairs they knew about at the end of last summer, so the demand is tripled during the boating months.

Trailers: If you are a boat owner who also has a trailer with your boat, the trailer typically gets even less attention than the boat. Some trailers see more miles and usage than the boat itself. Trailers also require maintenance to insure its working parts remain in working order.

Happy Boating!

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of "Upstate Outdoors," broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. This week's guest will be Charles Ruth, SCDNR Deer Project Coordinator to discuss the deer tag system. Contact Gentry at pgentry6@bellsouth.net.