

Vessels Need Extra Attention in the Snow

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

We've got snow in the forecast for later this week, and as is common for Kodiak, it will likely be mixed with or followed by rain. While landlubbers are often inconvenienced by the wet snow, it rarely sends a home to the bottom of the sea. Aboard boats tied up in the harbor, though, it's a different story — a snowy winter doesn't go by without at least one small boat getting so overloaded that it sinks.

"The snow and rain and snow and rain gets a heavy pack, so you want to make sure the vessel's not going to sink. So if it's a smaller vessel, of course, you're going to want to pay more attention."

Brian Corder is the owner of A-K Small Boat Services in Kodiak, and he's somewhat of an expert on protecting boats against disaster while in port. His company, which he bought from its founder in September, looks after clients' boats in both of Kodiak's harbors when the owners are away — and that includes clearing them of snow, and a lot more:

"All my contracts, if there's four inches or more, I automatically start shoveling snow for people. I check the boats, I go on them Monday through Friday (at) random times. I don't have a set schedule when I go down there — some days in the morning, some days in the afternoon. I check the laz once or twice a month. I check the bilge; make sure the water levels are staying the same, that the pumps are doing what they're supposed to be doing. Make sure the batteries are staying charged, that the shore power is still on. And that the boat is safe — and then maintain it from there."

If you're taking care of your own vessel during the off-season, or watching a friend's, Corder has some tips of things you should keep an eye on.

"Long term, make sure the fish hole is covered up so excess rain water can't get in there. Make sure that the bilge pump is up and running in the engine rooms, so when it does you have an emergency float so when it does get to those levels it automatically drains. Make sure your batteries keep that charge if your bilge pump is running off of the battery charge if your bilge pump runs off the battery charge. Or if it's on the shore power system, then you want to just make sure your shore power stays on."

The best way to do that, Corder said, maybe only half-jokingly, is to remember to pay your electric bill during the off-season.

He added that A-K Small Boat Service is also available just for snow-clearing on an as-needed basis. You can find him on Facebook, where he also posts updates of his daily rounds of Kodiak's several miles of floats.