



*by Captain Stan Glatzer*  
**Walking Fenders**

**Question:** What is a walking fender that you refer to on occasion? Roger, Greenport

**Answer:** "Bumpers," as the newly initiated boat owner calls them, are the inflated cylinders or balls that hang over the vessel's sides and are used to protect not only your boat when coming alongside a dock or rafting up, but also to protect any neighboring vessel from damage should you tap his topsides. "Fender" is the proper term for these most inexpensive aids, which, when used properly, can help prevent an insurance claim from being filed. Before I define what a "walking fender" is, let me describe two instances that occurred this past July at the Kismet, Fire Island docking facility.

An excellent Skipper (S) of a 37-foot Sea Ray had just demonstrated great skill in maintaining position just outside the marina while awaiting docking space. The entry into the marina and the boat handling as the vessel was

turned in the tight space of the marina was performed magnificently, with the smallest adjustments to the twin engines and without the wheel's being used, a skill only an experienced Skipper (S) could accomplish. As the vessel was being backed down into the appointed slip, the boat turned broadside to the wind, a very common occurrence that many Skippers (S/s) have had to deal with. With the stern at the pilings, the bow began to swing down on a boat docked nearby. The experienced and competent Skipper was heard to say, "There is nothing I can do now but wait." Fortunately there was only a slight wind and enough hands on the dock to fend off any contact between vessels, and the Sea Ray was successfully backed into the slip.

The second incident didn't end as happily as the one described above. A skipper (s) of a 34-foot Formula was leaving his assigned slip, and with the wind at his stern, proceeded to cover most of the width of the marina before attempting to turn the vessel away from striking a vessel opposite the slip he was vacating. After completing the turn allowing the bow to clear, the skipper (s) applied power to escape an accident, without realizing that the stern swings wider than the bow in a forward turn, and succeeded in marrying another vessel and incurring a dowry to the tune of several thousand dollars, in addition to the damage sustained by his own boat.



*Crewmember stands with walking fender to use in a hurry.*

A discussion as to what steps the operators of the above vessels should have or could have taken to have prevented a near miss in one instance and a definite hit in the other is left to the readers to partake in with one another. I would like to explain how, though the situations were already in progress, the preparation of having a "walking fender" in service would have minimized any contact made between vessels.

I have noticed over the past 25+ years that most Skippers (S/s) rarely deploy fenders except when approaching a side-to-docking. It is understandable that the fenders deployed at the beam ends would prohibit access to the narrow slips between pilings, but a fender secured up forward on both the starboard and port sides

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