



BOATING EDUCATION & SAFETY

by Capt. John L. Annino

For a long time, boaters have considered the most dangerous time in boating to be that when they're re-fueling. This statement is simply meant to heighten your awareness of some very simple steps to follow when at the fuel dock or the gas station.

By following some basic safety rules, you can enjoy many years of safe boating. After securing your vessel to the fuel dock; turn off the engine(s), extinguish all smoking materials, close all windows, doors and hatches and shut down any galley stoves, electronic or electrical devices etc. Gasoline fumes are heavier than air; just like oil and water separate so do gas fumes and air. The gas fumes being heavier, will sink to the bottom of your bilge and just sit there. By closing up the boat, we are creating roadblocks and keeping as many fumes as possible out of the boat.

This next part may sound dumb, but it is necessary to say it Make sure you know where the fuel goes and that you are dispensing the proper fuel. There are plenty of stories about the boater that fills his diesel-powered boat up with gas and

Proper Fueling of Vessels

vice/versa. And there are just as many stories about the boater that put 40 gallons of gas into the fishing rod holder or water tank. No, I'm not kidding. It happens.

Now comes the important part. When dispensing the gas, make certain that the filler spout is actually touching the fill plate on the boat. This will dissipate any static electricity that may form through the boat's grounding system. Failure to do this can result in a static electrical discharge, and with gas fumes present, a possible explosion.

Do not fill the tank all the way. Gasoline will expand with heat; so you should leave room for this expansion to take place. After dispensing the proper amount of fuel, clean up any spills, replace the filler cap and dispose of

your rags in the proper manner. **DO NOT START THE BOAT YET.** You must ventilate first. Open all the windows, doors and hatches to aid ventilation. Remember those fumes down in the bilge of the boat? We have to get rid of them before we can start the engine. Any vessel having a compartment that houses an engine or fuel tank, must have a means to exhaust out any fumes. This is done with blower motors. Turn your blower motors on for a minimum of 4 to 5 minutes

prior to starting the engine. You should then sniff the bilge for fumes. If there are any fumes present – **DO NOT START THE BOAT.** Keep ventilating and locate the cause of the fumes and fix it. Only after all fumes are gone should you start the engines.

The same precautions should be taken when filling portable gas cans. They should be placed on the ground or the dock and the filler spout should make contact with the container when filling.

Following these common sense precautions will help you enjoy our sport with a greater degree of safety. Think about that, please. Safe Boating!



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