



The Lighthouse

Operating a twin-engine boat when one goes out

*Courtesy boatingmag.com
by Jim Hendricks*

Just as we were rounding the west end of San Clemente Island, some 50 nautical miles from our home port of Huntington Harbor, California, the port outboard rattled to a halt. The

it take to get home? Would the single engine limit our speed, forcing us to slog back — a passage that would require at least five hours? Or would we be able to plane the 32-foot center console to get home within a more reasonable time frame?



gears in the lower unit had detonated. Fortunately, the Boston Whaler 320 Outrage was equipped with twin Mercury 250 hp Verado outboards, so we weren't dead in the water. We had a spare "get home" engine in the form of the starboard outboard.

The question was: How long would

We quickly found out the single 250 Verado would plane the 320 Outrage, albeit with the engine at nearly wide-open throttle. Calm seas helped ease the run. While it took one hour and 15 minutes outbound, the ride home lasted more than three hours.

While you might think it's okay to continue to stay out and enjoy your day on the water, it's prudent to head for port as soon as possible once an engine goes kaput. The problem affecting one outboard — such as a fuel issue — might subsequently affect the other, possibly leaving your boat dead in the water.

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MARINA TENANTS ...

We will be hosting the South West International Boat Show April 12-15 this year.

Remember, you will be affected and complete details will be announced next month.



Simple gelcoat repairs

*Courtesy boatu.s.
by Mark Corke*

If your boat has a case of dock rash it could be time to think about repairing and refreshing your gelcoat.

No matter how careful you are, fiberglass boats collect dings and gouges over time. Many of these are minor and limited to the gelcoat — that smooth, shiny outer layer of the fiberglass layup. Shallow scratches can often be wet sanded and buffed out. But when larger cracks and

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Operating

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Here are five steps you should know in case one of your twin outboards quits.

Plane test

Find out ahead of time whether or not just one outboard is sufficient to plane your boat. Run it on a single outboard as if one engine had quit.

This test is particularly important if you're buying a new boat. If the boat won't plane on just one of the twin engines, ask to test a model with more powerful twins. Do this until you find the right set of twins for getting home on one engine.

If you're repowering an existing boat, consider this an opportunity to boost the horsepower to make sure you can plane on one outboard.

Tilt and trim

When running on just one of two outboards, tilt up the non-operable motor. This gets the lower unit out of the water, eliminating as much drag as possible.

At the same time, you might need to keep the running outboard trimmed in substantially. This will enhance the engine's ability to lift the stern and keep the boat on plane. Trim in all the way to propel the boat out of the hole, then try trimming out in small increments to see how far you can go without falling off plane. Note that sharp turns should be avoided with one engine tilted up, lest the tie bar may get bent.

Weight forward

To get the boat on plane initially, you might need to move some weight, such as gear and crew members, toward the bow. Outboard boats tend to squat in the stern and rise in the bow as they accelerate out of the hole. Getting weight out of the aft quarters and onto the bow helps the boat climb on plane.

Once fully underway, crew members can move off the bow but might need to remain amidships to keep the boat on plane.

Lighten up

The lighter the boat, the easier it is to plane. We're not talking about throwing equipment overboard, but you can lighten the boat by draining livewells, tossing ice out of the fish boxes or emptying the freshwater tank. Water weighs 8.3 pounds per gallon, so draining a pair of 30-gallon transom livewells eliminates nearly 500 pounds of weight on the stern.

Use your tabs

Trim tabs help lift the stern, not only during hole shot but also while underway. Use them judiciously to pop up and stay on plane when running with just one of two engines.

Trim tabs can correct a boat's tendency to heel over when running on just one outboard — the result of unequalized propeller torque. It's not only uncomfortable, but also the prop can lose its bite (as the hull leans to the opposite side of the operating motor). Apply down tab to the side that's lowest to level the boat and keep you on an even keel.

Humor for the day . . .

A sailor who smelled like a distillery flopped on a subway seat next to a priest. The sailor's tie was stained, his face was plastered with red lipstick, and a half empty bottle of gin was sticking out of his torn coat pocket.

He opened his newspaper and began reading. After a few minutes, the sailor turned to the priest and asked, "Say, Father, what causes arthritis?"

"Mister, it's caused by loose living, being with cheap, wicked women, too much alcohol and a contempt for your fellow man."

"Hmmm" said the sailor, "This newspaper article claims that the Pope has it!"



The Lighthouse

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MARINA

2551 South Shore Blvd. Suite B
League City, TX 77573
(281) 334-0515 • Fax (281) 334-0288

MARINA STAFF

Donna Rogers

Marina Manager

Donna.Rogers@sshmarina.com

Chase Cobble

Harbormaster

Chase.Cobble@sshmarina.com

Virginia Zelenka

Accounting Coordinator

Virginia.Zelenka@sshmarina.com

Richard Bustamante

David Hillis

John Killins

Fuel Pier/Maintenance

Amber Moore

Leasing Agent

Amber.Moore@sshmarina.com

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Simple gelcoat repairs

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gouges form, they need to be filled. In most cases, scratches in gelcoat are purely cosmetic and don't affect the underlying integrity of the actual fiberglass, but you'll still want to address them to prevent moisture from migrating into the laminate as well as to preserve the appearance of the boat.

Many owners shy away from gelcoat repairs thinking it's a complicated and difficult project. But with the correct tools and materials, the right attitude, and a little time, professional-looking repairs are within reach for the average boat owner.

Before getting into the actual repair, it's important to understand what gelcoat is. Gelcoat is the first thing sprayed into a female mold when a boat is built, usually to a thickness of .5 to 1 mm. Depending on the method of construction, layers of chopped mat and fiberglass cloth are then built up on top to form the hull, deck, and other molded parts. When the parts are taken out of the mold, it's the smooth, now outside layer of gelcoat that you see. Gelcoat doesn't fully cure when it's exposed to air, but because one side is against the mold and the other is covered by fiberglass and resin, air is excluded, and the gelcoat cures to form an impervious barrier between the water and laminate.

White is the most popular color for gelcoat, but there are other colors, too. When doing repairs, see if you can buy gelcoat from your boat's manufacturer so you'll know the color will match. If not, you'll need to buy white or clear gelcoat and tint it to match. Tinting kits are available from gelcoat suppliers.

Gelcoat is thin, almost like paint, and will run, especially on vertical surfaces. Use several thin coats or use gelcoat paste that is thicker with fewer tendencies to sag. Which type you use will depend on the repair and your method of application. For vertical surfaces, I prefer spray application using several thin coats.

As mentioned, gelcoat has to be sealed from the air for it to harden properly. Otherwise it will stay tacky to the touch. For this reason, you'll often see "waxed" and "nonwaxed" gelcoat for sale. Gelcoat that has wax added will fully cure; the wax rises to the surface after application, sealing out the

air and allowing it to cure. Nonwaxed gelcoat can be used when several coats are required, but that means having two different kinds of gelcoat on hand. The simpler way is to always use the waxed kind, lightly wet-sanding the cured surface between coats.

As with all repairs, preparation is key. Just slapping on some gelcoat will give disappointing results as well as look unsightly, and the repair will probably need to be redone within a year or two. It's better to do it right the first time.

If this is your first time repairing gelcoat, start with a fairly small repair in an inconspicuous place. Gain confidence before moving on to more visible spots on the boat.

Seaglass, my Grand Banks 32, had a small crack in the top of the forward cabin trunk that needed repairing. Here's how I did it.

- 1) Start by wiping down the area to be repaired with acetone to remove surface dirt, contaminants, and any surface wax that might interfere with the bond of the new gelcoat.
- 2) Open up the crack a bit to give the repair the best chance of seamlessly blending into the existing gelcoat. This can be done using a sharp wood chisel or scraper; I prefer to use a Dremel tool fitted with a burr bit. If you start cutting into the laminates, you're going too deep.
- 3) It took about five minutes to create this V-shaped groove in the gelcoat. Vacuum up the dust and then wipe down the area to be repaired with an acetone-soaked rag.



Use a dremel tool fitted with a burr bit.

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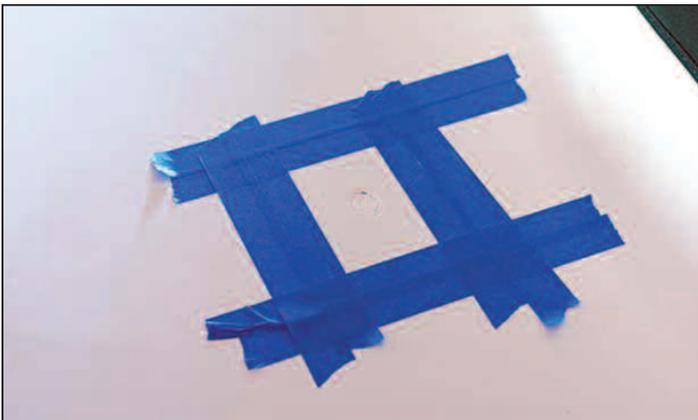
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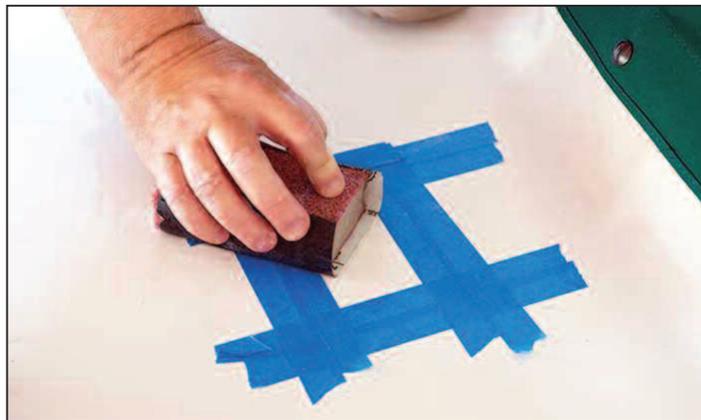
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Mask off the repair area.

4) Mask off the repair, leaving about 2 inches all the way around. Use plenty of tape and a plastic sheet to protect the boat from damage and drips.

5) Mix the gelcoat thoroughly following the manufacturer's recommendations. Adding too much catalyst gives insufficient working time; too little, and the gelcoat won't properly cure. I'm using waxed gelcoat, which cures even



Hand sand the gelcoat repair.

when exposed to air.

6) Use the mixing stick to run the gelcoat into the crack. Using a tapping motion ensures that there are no trapped air bubbles. Overfill the crack and leave it to cure overnight.

7) After the gelcoat cures (I gave it about eight hours), sand down the repair until it's flush with the surrounding surface. Start with 180-grit waterproof paper wrapped around a block until flat and smooth. Then switch to 240-grit before finishing off with 400-grit or finer, which removes any scratches.

8) Remove the masking tape and plastic sheet, then finish off the repair with cutting compound followed by a layer of wax polish. You can hand-buff, but a slow-speed buffer leaves a better finish.



Mix the gelcoat.



Use a mixing stick to run the gelcoat into the crack.



Use an electric buffer for the best finish.

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