

MOST COMMON BOAT LAUNCHING MISTAKES

1. *Hesitating on the chain ladder.*

- a) When entering the boat, don't get your feet caught between the ladder and the boat. Spot your landing place in the boat, check the swell, and then go for your landing spot on the rise of the swell. The boat will come up to meet you. If you jump in while the boat is falling away, you are likely to fall heavily. The longer you hang on the ladder, the more likely you are to get a foot caught between the boat and the ladder. This can be serious. We have had broken feet.
- b) When exiting the boat, don't let your hands or feet get caught between the boat and the chain ladder. Don't hesitate. Watch the rise and fall of the boat relative to the ladder and jump on the ladder at the top of the rise of the swell. Reach up high, grab the ladder, then pull your feet up out of harms way.
- c) When exiting the boat as the boat operator, follow the above suggestions. Leave the boat clipped onto the chain ladder, climb up several rungs and then ask the crane operator to raise the boat above the swell height. If the boat is swinging wildly, the crane operator may either pull the boat up against the strain of the bow line to kill the swing or lower the boat back in the water and try again to lift it without causing it to swing. In either case, you will be safe in your high position on the ladder (one meter above the boat).

2. *When retrieving the boat, the boat operator unclips the bow line as soon as she/he gets on the ladder:*

- a) Don't do this. Do as suggested in section 1.c. Unclipping the boat at this point is one of the most dangerous and totally unnecessary risks we take. It is also one of the most common mistakes. It seems to be counter intuitive **NOT** to immediately unclip. Making this mistake has caused numerous injuries. Some serious.
- b) The bow line can be pulled out of your hand causing the boat to be out of your control. What usually ensues is a wildly swinging boat that takes a long time to retrieve. What sometimes happens is to smash the boat. This is all totally avoidable.

3. *Varying the speed of the gantry from fast- to slow- to fast while a boat is suspended:*

- a) The above maneuver causes the boat to swing wildly. Wild swinging is very dangerous. The crane operators must try hard to prevent this.

4. *Lifting the boat off the trailer when the hoist is not perfectly perpendicular:*

- a) This will cause the boat to swing abruptly. Often damaging the boat or engine.

5. Lowering the boat onto an improperly positioned trailer:

- a) This will frequently have the same results as in section 4.
- b) Boats **MUST** be properly positioned on trailers. Failure to do so will result in damage to the boat, trailer, engine, etc. If you trail an improperly loaded boat, the boat can fall off the trailer, the trailer can come off the hitch and the engine may hit the street. This is only part of a long possible list.

6. Hooking on to the chain ladder either too high or too low:

- a) It is important to hook on about 4 rungs above the water level between swells. If you hook on too high, when a big swell passes under, it will leave the boat hanging by the bow line. This can be very bad. If you hook on too low, you can get the full weight of the chain ladder. This also makes it tough for the operator to unhook.

7. Forgetting to shut the engine off when hoisting the boat:

- a) The last thing to do before hooking up to retrieve is to shut off the engine. There is a lot going on at this moment. You are holding the head ache ball in one hand and the instinct is to grab the hook and hook up. Don't do this. Reach over and shut the engine off first, **THEN** hook up.
- b) If you do forget, you must quickly put the boat back in the water. The water pump will burn up before you can get it up to shut it off.

8. Unhooking the bowline before the operator is ready to shove off:

- a) This can be bad. If the engine is not started, you must **immediately drop anchor**. When the anchor is holding **THEN** figure out what to do about it. If the engine will start, the solution is obvious, if not you have choices. You can elect to row back to the ladder or you can swim a line over to the ladder. Anchor first and figure it out later. Wasting time trying to figure out what to do before anchoring can easily put you in the surfline with obvious consequences. This HAS happened multiple times.

9. Hooking up to the seaward chain of the chain ladder:

- a) Always hook up to the shoreward chain. Hooking to the seaward chain will flip the ladder around every time the boat pulls on it. This can throw people off the ladder.

10. Wearing knives or weight belts on the ladder:

- a) These mistakes cause injuries. Wearing a leg knife on the inside of the leg when retrieving has punched the sheath into a divers calf causing serious injury. Many knife straps have been broken.
- b) Tripping the weight belt off onto those below can be as bad as you can imagine.

11. Not being on the side of the ladder opposite the boat:

- a) Experienced people descend or ascend the seaward chain with the boat out at 90 degrees from them and with nothing but water below them, should they fall. If you feel uncomfortable on the side of the ladder, at least go up or down opposite the boat.

12. Two persons on the ladder at the same time:

- a) Two persons on the ladder at the same side, except when assisting an injured or frightened person, is dangerous.
- b) Two persons on the ladder opposite each other is safer, but it still puts one person right over the boat should they fall.
- c) If both are on the same side, and the top person falls, well...

13. Operator wrapping the bow line around his wrist or hand while going up or down with the boat:

- a) Hold the line lightly in the palm of your hand.

14. Operator holding the bow line hook in his hand instead of the pigtail while going up or down with the boat:

- a) Use the pigtail. It was instituted after several bad injuries.