KEEPING A WEATHER EYE

Brewer Yacht Yards Takes Command of the Weather

Whether you’re a world record holder, like Ellen McArthur, racing around the world alone, or “Joe-Boater”, cruising local waters, having access to the most up-to-date weather information is key to the success and safety of any boating adventure. Accurate weather forecasts are also critical to the interests of marine related organizations and businesses, such as yacht clubs and marinas, especially during storm season when threatened by significant weather systems. For this reason, each boating season, Brewer Yacht Yards employs the valuable forecasting and tracking services of Commanders Weather Corporation. For the last three years, Brewer Yacht Yards has relied on Commanders’ daily tropical outlook reports to better prepare for and protect against some of the worst Mother Nature has to offer. Thanks to Commanders, any tropical storm or hurricane that may threaten the Brewer Yacht Yard region is carefully monitored. From their weather station in New Hampshire, the Commanders meteorology team provides all 21 Brewer Yacht Yard facilities (via e-mail) with detailed discussions and maps of active weather systems, plotting the course and predicting the track and the anticipated severity of each storm.

“This unique service allows Brewer Yacht Yard management and personnel to better anticipate storms, notify marina members, and take a pro-active stance in the face of impending weather,” says Michael Keyworth, General Manager of Brewer Cove Haven Marina. “Getting this information well ahead of local forecasts, allows us to better protect our investments as well as those of our customers. It’s truly a valuable service.”

Michael should know. Over the years, he has personally used Commanders routing services on trips to and from the Caribbean and across the Atlantic. “The forecasters at Commanders Weather have always been spot on when directing me to the best, safest, and fastest passages,” says Michael. “They have routed me around many difficult weather systems. It has been comforting to know, over the past few hurricane seasons, that all Brewer Yacht Yard managers have had access to Commanders tropical updates. These updates give location-specific weather information which would not otherwise be available to our managers. Jack Brewer also recognizes that by subscribing to this service he is providing a valuable aid to our customers, should they be faced with preparing their own hurricane response.”

According to Michael, the advantage of Commanders Weather Corporation is that the information is tailored to the marine industry and specifically targeted to marinas and boaters. The National Weather Service does not deliver the location-specific information we need,” says Michael. They use a shotgun approach, when it comes to forecasting; Commanders gives us much more.”

Commanders Provides Critical Meteorological Information

Commanders Weather Corporation has been in business for over ten years. Owners Ken Campbell and George Caras, meteorologists by trade, along with their knowledgeable staff, provide over 25 years of combined meteorology experience. “We’re a marine oriented business,” says George. “Though we don’t necessarily have boating backgrounds ourselves, we are very involved with sailors by contact. We provide critical weather information to racers, cruisers, and delivery captains. We e-mail, fax, and post important weather information; which our clients can download from our computer system, using a password.” Weather information provided by Commanders can also be tailored to each client’s needs. Reports include everything from wind direction and speed; to routing information, designed to get boats from point to point via the safest and quickest course; to specific storm track information. “We can provide routing information anywhere in the world and we can warn boaters about areas to avoid, such as where squalls or headwinds might be encountered,” says George. “We serve a wide variety of clients: from around-the-world racers; to America’s Cup and Bermuda racers; to everyday cruisers; to marinas and yacht clubs.”

To learn more about Commanders Weather Corporation, call (603) 882-6789 or visit their web site at www.commandersweather.com.
Tide Watch

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Tide Watch is a newsletter created in-house specifically for Brewer Yacht Yard customers and staff. With the exception of special editions, it is published twice a year. Over 15,000 copies of each issue are direct-mailed in May and October, at the open and close of each boating season. We welcome feedback, contributions, questions, and ideas for stories. While we do enjoy sharing our stories with you, we also have an interest in hearing your stories. If you cruise between Brewer Yacht Yards this season, let us know where you've been and how you've spent your time. Feel free to enclose pictures; we may include them in a future edition. If you have technical questions relating to mechanical, electrical, rigging, fiberglass, carpentry, or finish issues, drop us a line. We'll pose your questions to our BYY staff and print the answers in upcoming newsletters. Our crew - of over 300 service technicians - is a wealth of information. We are eager to share our expertise with you, so fire away.

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On Deck

Kenny Lidstone

“I started working on boats in 1963, in the mold room at Pearson Yachts, for a dollar twenty-five an hour,” says Kenny Lidstone, Fiberglass Specialist at Brewer Pilots Point Marina. “I was 19 years old, fresh out of high school. I’m 62 now!”

Though Kenny has worked at a number of boatyards during his career, including Pearson, Hodgdon’s, and Crocker’s, he declared Brewer Pilots Point Marina his home 15 years ago. “I love it here,” says Kenny. “Even when I’m not on the clock, I’m a company man. I always keep a few clean Brewer shirts at home, to wear on my days off. Whenever I go to visit another waterfront and walk the docks, people will talk to me, because they see my shirt and they know the Brewer logo. I get the biggest kick out of that!”

Rives Potts, General Manager of Brewer Pilots Point Marina appreciates Kenny’s dedication to his job. “Kenny is the kind of team member all of us like to have. He’s passionate about his work; he always has a smile on his face; and he has been practicing his craft for 40 years! He’s also proud of his work and of being a part of the Brewer team. His personality is great; his work ethic is terrific; and customers enjoy his enthusiasm and dedication to his craft.”

“I’ve always been a glass man,” says Kenny. “I’ve been a painter too, but doing both took a toll on me, so I decided to just focus on fiberglass. I’m content doing glass work. I do hulls, bottoms, extensive gelcoat work, bow thruster installations, and hardtops. But I’m most proud of the custom jobs I do.” Most recently, Kenny fabricated a hard top for a large Donzi from his own templates and forms. “It’s really satisfying to take on challenging jobs like that,” says Kenny, “and it’s fun, because I feel confident in the durability of the results I get.” Kenny gets a lot of satisfaction from tackling tougher projects. “Some jobs can be monotonous, but usually there’s something new to do all the time. The more difficult projects let me use my experience and my eye for how things should be built up,” Kenny explains. “I understand the structure of boats and the stresses placed them, so I always know what I need to do with fiberglass to make things work. Over the years, I’ve seen what can go wrong with fiberglass boats, so when I see a problem I can say, ‘okay; I know what I’m going to do here.’ I’m familiar and comfortable with fiberglass. And, since I’m confident in what I do, it’s fun to talk to customers and explain to them what I’m doing. It’s all part of the challenge and the hands-on nature of the work.”

Given Kenny’s love and understanding of fiberglass, it’s a little ironic that, away from the boatyard, he is most fond of wooden boats. “I was raised around wooden boats,” he says. “My dad had a 28’ wooden boat that he always loved to sail to Maine. That influenced me a lot, so I still admire wooden boats today. That’s part of why I enjoy visiting waterfronts and marinas, admiring boats and talking to people, but I don’t spend my time off working on boats. I spend my free time working on my house. I built it myself, so I like to work on it in my free time. I like carpentry; I like working on the house; and I like just being outside. I’m not a sports guy; I like to swing a hammer and a bang a few nails. I’ve always got a project going.”
“Where one ends up is sort of by accident,” says Michael Keyworth, General Manager of Brewer Cove Haven Marina. “I grew up on the water; I played tag in boats; I sailed with my family; and I sailed in dinghy regattas every weekend. Sailing has always been very much a part of my life. When my brothers and I were too young to drive, we commuted to sailing lessons in a 20-foot runabout, which my father made us maintain. When I was 14, I started working in boatyards. My brothers and I worked the summers at Blue Water Marina, near our home in Maryland. I was the youngest on the crew, ‘the nipper’, so I had to scrape and paint bottoms. Back then we sanded our way up masts and varnished our way down. We had to hoist and lower ourselves,” Michael recalls. “It was a wonderful job, a job that taught me a work ethic and a lot about customer service; lessons I carry with me still today.”

During college, Michael took a job at another boat yard, launching boats on trailers, while studying psychology. “As a psychologist, I began consulting and working with schools for profoundly mentally retarded kids, while I continued to sail locally. I did this for about five years until I had the opportunity to take a boat to St. Thomas.” While there, a captain approached Michael and talked him (and his wife) into taking more time off to run charter boats. “I was only 25 at the time,” he says.

Before long, Michael found himself working as captain aboard the maxi boat Nirvana. Over the next ten years, he and his wife sailed around the world, twice, and competed in regattas in Norway, Italy, England, Australia, Hong Kong, Hawaii, San Francisco. “I was fortunate to be aboard a boat that was built to compete! We held the Bermuda race record for 14 years, simultaneous to a 14 year Fastnet record,” he says proudly. “It was a lot of fun, but it was also hard work. Being a yacht captain, and being responsible for racing boats over long distances, meant I had to find my way around the world and manage up to 26 people. There’s no question that the skills I developed ultimately prepared me for working in the Brewer Yacht Yard organization. Sailing prepared me to run one of Brewer’s vessels; one of its flag ships,” he says.

So, about 20 years ago, when Michael and his wife decided it was time to move on from full-time, professional sailing, Michael called Rives Potts, with whom he had sailed on Nirvana. Rives was running Brewer Pilots Point Marina at the time and hired Michael as a service manager. After two years at Pilots Point, Jack Brewer asked Michael to relocate to Brewer Cove Haven Marina, in Barrington, Rhode Island, where Michael has remained for the last 18 years.

“Cove Haven was already a Brewer yard when I arrived,” says Michael. “It was in fairly decent shape; not bad, but not great. It just hadn’t been upgraded yet. Mostly, the docks needed replacing and significant dredging needed to happen. When I arrived, there were 201 slips; now we’re approaching 357 slips!”

But what Michael is most proud of is not the capital improvements he has made at Brewer Cove Haven Marina, or the talented team he has assembled; he is most proud of the recognition he has received for his activism and concern for the marine environment in the state of Rhode Island. Over the years, Michael has successfully negotiated a truce in what he calls the ‘dredging war’, making the process more environmentally sound; he has helped author the first environmental guide for use in marinas; he has helped eliminate marine waste, assisting legislators in making Rhode Island a ‘no discharge’ state; and he has started a shrink wrap recycling program, delivering 46,000 lbs. of shrink wrap waste in the programs first year! Currently, Michael is working on storm water and pressure-washing discharge management solutions for marinas. “I’ve always made responsible responses to environmental issues related to the marine environment,” says Michael. “I think it’s important to seek out manageable solutions that help sustain our industry and create a cleaner environment for boaters to enjoy.”

Recently, in recognition of his efforts and environmental stewardship, Michael was awarded the highest environmental award one can receive in the state of Rhode Island. “The Alfred Hawks award is presented to one Rhode Islander each year,” he says. “It’s unusual for anyone in the marine industry to receive this award. I’m quite proud of it.”

Michael is also proud of his association with Brewer Yacht Yards. He is keenly aware that the Brewer organization has given him the opportunity to pursue the things he feels are most important to the marine industry. Brewer’s is a shining example of what can be done, if you do it right,” he says. “I try to compliment Jack Brewer, as often as possible, for giving us the autonomy to do what we feel is right as managers. It’s an honor to work for Jack and it’s an honor to be at a point in my career where I can reflect and feel good about my own legacy. I think by the time I retire, I’ll feel good about what I’ve done, how I’ve left Cove Haven, and what I’ve given back to the Brewer organization.”

Michael will also sail away, one day, feeling good about having successfully promoted the sport he loves. “I’ve always felt it is a fundamental responsibility, and good for business, to sail with clients and to help them achieve what they want, whether through participation, coaching, or advice. It’s a huge commitment, but I consider it part of my job,” he says.

But it’s not all work and no play for Michael. He also enjoys racing 420s with his wife on Thursday nights and watching his boys sail and compete at the collegiate level. “I think sailing, and boating in general, is a sport you’re never too young to do, and never too old. It’s a rare activity where men and women can compete on equal footing. It doesn’t get any better.”
Summer Fun
Boat Trailer Service:
Before you have your boat hauled and set on its trailer this fall, take some time to inspect the trailer’s condition. “Often we find broken rollers, flat tires, latches that don’t work, dead electrical hook-ups, and wheel bearings that need to be repacked,” says Joe Hinds of Brewer Fiddler’s Cove Marina. “Care of a boat trailer should not be neglected; it should be part of your general boat maintenance. When a boat is set on a trailer, the trailer should be maneuverable, in good condition, and ready to go over the road.”

John McMahon, General Manager of Brewer Bruce & Johnson’s Marina, agrees. “People should especially place emphasis on servicing and greasing trailer bearings,” he says. “Wheel bearings can seize up from exposure to salt water and a lack of maintenance. Given the right, or wrong, conditions, this situation can turn catastrophic.”

Metal Care:
“Stainless and/or aluminum fixtures, rails, stanchions and hardware should always be rinsed after boat use,” says Mike Sperzel of Brewer Ferry Point Marina, “but this is especially true at the end of each boating season. If salt is left to sit, it will eventually pit and rust stainless steel, especially on boats that are covered in shrink wrap for the winter. Aluminum pits even more easily,” says Mike, “so a thorough fresh water rinse will help protect fixtures like bow rails, outriggers, and outrigger bases.”

Chainplate Inspections:
“In general, sailboat owners are not paying enough attention to their rigs,” says Jay Burns, General Manager of Brewer Sakonnet Marina. “The life expectancy on standing rigging is thought to be only about 15 years, plus or minus, depending on the kind of use the boat has experienced. A rig needs to be inspected annually, or every couple of years,” says Jay. “If your rig fails, your insurance company is not likely to offer coverage, especially if the failure is considered to be the result of a lack of maintenance! Shrouds, toggles, pins, and chainplates are all critical inspection areas.”

Transmission Maintenance:
Though often overlooked, transmissions play a vital role in the safe operation of any vessel. “Keeping a regimented preventative maintenance schedule is as important for transmissions as it is for engines,” says Mike Sperzel of Brewer Ferry Point Marina. “Lubricants, whether transmission fluid or oil, should be changed annually; if there are filters, they should also be replaced annually. The replacement interval is determined by the amount of usage,” says Mike. “Velvet Drive, like most manufacturers, recommends fluid changes annually, but even more often with heavy usage. I also think it’s essential that you use whatever lubricant is recommended by the manufacturer.”

During a lubricant change, it is extremely important to analyze the color and smell of the fluid or oil that has been removed. This will assist in determining the condition of the transmission’s internal parts. “Generally, a blackish colored lubricant indicates burnt and worn clutch discs. The clutch discs are similar to the brake pads on a car,” says Mike. “This condition can be caused by ordinary wear and tear. As the clutch discs wear, a ‘dust’ is created which discolors the lubricant. A blackish colored fluid can also be created by an overheating situation, if the lubricant boils beyond its rated temperature. This can be caused by a lack of lubricant, by a lack of water in the cooler, or by a severe stress situation, such as a prop shaft-to-strut misalignment,” says Mike. “On the other hand, a milkshake colored lubricant indicates water intrusion. This condition is caused by submersion, or by a faulty cooler. If the cooler is old and corroded, it is possible for water to enter the cooling tubes on the lubricant side of the cooler. Replacement of the cooler, and an inspection of the hoses and lines, prior to any water intrusion, is considered preventative maintenance.”

Finally, Mike offers an important operational reminder, “you should always pause in neutral for a brief period, at idle speed, when shifting gears. Shifting should be easy, if everything is working properly,” he says. “If it’s hard to move the shifter, in any direction, then a cable may need to be replaced.”
Brewer Crews
Protect Your Investment
Insurance is something that most of us don’t like to think about until we really need it. But when we do, it is highly comforting to know we are properly covered.

“If you own an older boat, there are certain pitfalls which are important to avoid,” says Lenny Bellet, of Brewer Preferred Insurance. “In the case of a claim, if your policy ‘depreciates machinery’, your payout will be significantly decreased based on the age of your boat. For example, if you hit a rock in your 1994 Sea Ray and do $5000 damage to the outdrive, your claim could be adjusted significantly, depending on the type of policy you have.”

Following this scenario, assume you have coverage from a company that depreciates machinery based on the age of a boat. “From the $5000 repair cost, the company will first reduce the payout by roughly 35% ($1750) and then apply your deductible of $500. This leaves you with $2750 to pay out of pocket on a $5000 claim,” says Lenny. “Alternatively, in this same scenario, if you are covered by a carrier that does not depreciate machinery, you would receive $4500 ($5000 less the $500 deductible).”

According to Lenny, in either case, you could have an “agreed value policy” with the same deductible amount, but some subtle differences in policy wording would have made a big difference when filing the claim. Needless to say, it pays to fully understand your insurance policy!

To learn more about your insurance coverage, carefully review the language of your agreement, or contact your provider directly. If you’d like to compare your policy to that offered by Brewer Preferred Insurance, call 1-800-282-8868 or e-mail your inquiry to brewerinsurance@gowrie.com.