

Critical Points for Securing Your Boat for a Storm

Gatling Pointe Yacht Club Marina

A study done by BoatU.S. concluded that 50 percent of boats damaged at fixed docks during hurricanes could have been saved by using better dock lines: lines that were larger, longer, and/or protected against chafing. The following are SUGGESTED factors to develop the best plan for your boat in Gatling Pointe Marina. The diagram on the next page shows an arrangement of dock lines for a boat in one of our outside slips. Some have suggested that the final arrangement of lines, when preparing for a storm, should look like a spider web. In theory, you can't have too many lines.

1. REPLACE DOCK LINES REGULARLY. Any type of line deteriorates from sun and water exposure. Some recommend replacing lines ANNUALLY. You should use AT LEAST $\frac{1}{2}$ " lines for boats up to 25'; $\frac{5}{8}$ " for boats 25' to 34'; and $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" for larger/heavier boats. Size does matter! When in doubt, go bigger. The peace of mind is worth the slight additional cost. You need at least one long line (~35') to reach the outer piling in the adjacent slip on the dominant windward (northeast) corner.
2. Use chafe protection on any line that could be chafed by contact with chocks, pilings or any part of the boat. Old water hose sections or similar flexible material can be used. Be sure the chafe protection is secured on the part of the line where it's needed.
3. When securing lines, put the eye end on outer pilings so that the line can be adjusted from the boat. On the floating dock, put the eye end on the boat to allow adjustment from the dock. Use a proper Clove Hitch knot on cleats so that the lines can be adjusted. If you don't know how to tie a Clove Hitch, ask someone or go online to a site such as "animatedknots.com".
4. Secure lines high on the outer pilings to prevent the line from being snapped when the boat rises with the storm surge. Remember that the slack in the lines placed high on a piling close to the boat will increase as the water rises. Plan for the increased slack to prevent the boat from hitting the dock. Spring lines are essential. This effect is not as significant on a line secured to a distant piling (think geometry), so be sure to add a line to a distant piling on the side away from the finger pier. You may not be able to get to your boat during a severe storm to adjust the lines.
5. If you have an outside slip, put the bow towards the outside to reduce the force of the usual wind from the Northeast unless you have the problem of a large stern platform that is close to the dock even when properly secured. Spring lines are essential to prevent the boat from being thrown against the dock.
6. Fenders and fender boards won't compensate for a poor dock line arrangement, however, they can offer some additional protection if the boat is properly secured.
7. Remove or securely tie-down canvas bimini tops, dodgers, and cockpit covers. These will be damaged in a high wind and also increase the wind force on the boat. Remove sails if winds are predicted to be above 50 knots.