

How To Evaluate Your Boat's Air Conditioning

PassageMaker[®]

THE POWER CRUISING AUTHORITY

Sea Skills

What everyone needs to know about towing and salvage

Fueling at sea

Flares: Burn 'em to learn

Would MacGyver Throw That Away? Don't You

Bumpy Road to Madagascar

MIGHTY CAT:
Summerland 40



Whale Song among the "karst" islands of Thailand

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013
\$5.99US \$7.99CAN



12
Display until December 24, 2013

passagemaker.com

Samaritan in the eyes of the law and are thus protected from liability, but only as long as you “act as any prudent person would.” A lot of well-meaning skippers have been sued over that nebulous phrase, so if you have any qualms about your abilities, don’t attempt to tow another boat.

Good seamanship will always be a defense, but you may find yourself up against an old salt in court who will swear you were inept in your actions. In addition, your insurance policy will probably have a clause that frees the insurer of liability if you don’t exhibit what they consider to be good seamanship. Some marine insurance policies exclude all towing, so be sure to understand your policy before you consider a tow.


Don’t be hesitant to refuse to tow someone if the weather is bad, if you think your boat is too small or, again, if you’re unsure of your abilities. You have a legal (and moral) obligation to save lives, but the saving of property is not your problem. Stand by the disabled vessel until an acceptable towboat arrives on the scene, but don’t jeopardize yourself or your boat by attempting a rescue beyond your abilities.

If you’re at the other end of the towline, bear in mind that the laws of salvage entitle a rescuer to “fair compensation” for his services. In the pleasure-boat world, most towing is done out of courtesy, and a thank-you (or a bottle of wine) is satisfactory payment.

KNOW THE PRICE

If you find yourself needing a commercial tow, be sure to agree on a price before the towboat leaves the harbor. At the same time, find out how the towing company expects you to pay the bill; some will impound your boat until you pay in cash. Towing services have various ways of charging: Some use a flat rate, while others charge by the hour. If the charges are hourly, be sure to find out if the meter starts when the towboat leaves the dock, or when you’re actually under tow.

Don’t forget that the admiralty laws are on the side of the towing company, and if you try to evade the cost, most courts will penalize you heavily.

Towing is simply an exercise in good seamanship. Let’s hope you never end up on the towed end of the line. 

GARDEN VARIETY REFUELING

Nordhavn Rally Demonstrates Mid-Ocean Diesel-Transfer Techniques

BY JIM LEISHMAN

Escorting a fleet of 18 boats across the Atlantic during the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally (NAR) of 2004 required lots of planning that encompassed dealing with every conceivable problem—including transferring fuel if necessary. In our NAR operations manual issued before our departure from Ft. Lauderdale, we included detailed standard operating procedures for mid-ocean refueling, and sure enough, we got a chance to put them into practice.

On the second and longest leg of our voyage, the 1,880nm from Bermuda to the Azores, we turned to a direct course for Horta upon reaching 55 degrees of west longitude in good weather. Our speed was off a bit because of a west-setting current, and due to fuel requirements, increasing speed was not practical for *Uno Mas*, the smallest vessel in our fleet. Taking advantage of the fair weather, we decided to transfer about 100 gallons of fuel from the boat, allowing her to increase speed.

Our primary escort vessel, *Atlantic Escort*, was a new Nordhavn 57 with a special towing rig that would allow us to really tow any boat in our fleet—even in heavy weather. This type of towing requires the towing vessel to have a tow point forward of the rudder shaft: on *Atlantic Escort*, it included a reinforced tow bit mounted to the overhang of the cockpit and strengthened with compression posts to the transom. We also required each participant to have a tow ring installed at their boat’s stem and to have a specially built bridle attached to accommodate *Atlantic Escort*’s heavy towline.

Atlantic Escort also was equipped with a fuel transfer system, including a suction and distribution manifold to move and filter fuel from tank to tank. The system is fitted with an Oberdorfer 24-volt vane pump that moves about 3.5gpm. On the distribution manifold we simply included a spare port with a valve and a 3/4-inch male garden hose spigot. We had several 100-foot hoses and planned to use them for the transfer of fuel or water when needed.

Uno Mas was taken into tow. Once the boat was stable, a garden hose with a closed nozzle and fender attached was streamed behind *Atlantic Escort*, easily picked up with a boat hook by the crew of *Uno Mas* and retrieved aboard. The feed end was attached to our transfer manifold aboard *Atlantic Escort*. Upon receiving VHF confirmation from *Uno Mas*, we began pumping fuel.

We had one problem to overcome. The transfer hose dragged in the water. Even at the three knots or so we were traveling, the drag stretched the hose, reducing its diameter. We were afraid it might break. If doing it again, I would follow the same procedure but would purchase higher quality hoses that are better reinforced and less inclined to stretch. Obviously, if you were setting up an escort vessel



Atlantic Escort pumps fuel to Uno Mas through a simple garden hose while crossing the Atlantic.

that would routinely provide this service, you would buy an appropriately rated hose. For us, the economical and sacrificial garden hose did the trick.

Jim Leishman is vice president of Pacific Asian Enterprises, the builder of Nordhavn trawler yachts.

REFUELING PROTOCOL

Read the Nordhavn Atlantic Rally’s protocol for transferring fuel at sea. You’ll find it at www.passagemaker.com as a Web Extra.