

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marilyn DeMartini 954-564-7234 md@prpower.biz



SUMMER BOAT PREP ADVICE--DON'T FORGET THE STEERING SYSTEM!

Latham Marine Has Been Steering Customers Straight for Over 35 Years!

With summer full upon us, boaters are turning an eye toward the water and preparing their vessels for the first outing of the season, and Latham Marine is reminding them not to overlook their external steering system. When a marine system is as trouble free as Latham's steering, it might be easy to take for granted, but with age, hard use and harsh conditions, even a product as reliable as Latham Marine can require maintenance or rebuild.

According to Tom Gongola, technical sales specialist at Latham Marine, there are easy steps that even the least technical boater can take to assure their steering system is in top form before the first cruise—and these steps can save a great deal of time and aggravation while out on the water for a fun day of boating!

1. Start your system check on the outside of your boat.

Check the condition of external hoses--they should be pliable and free from cracks, heavy abrasions and signs of wear. In addition to leaking, worn hoses can allow seawater to enter the system, causing additional, more costly damage. "Check hoses at least once a year, especially if the boat has been in storage," he adds. Then check the condition of all of the steering system hardware; drive mounts, nuts, bolts, tie-bar assembly – nothing is too minor. Check the steering rams as well.

Check for potential steering cylinder trouble while the boat is on the trailer (the engine off and propeller removed). Check for air in the system by shaking the drive unit; there should be no movement in the cylinder rods. If there is, air must be bled from the system. If there is fluid leaking, a cylinder rebuild is likely necessary. Eventually, time and the elements take their toll on O-rings and other seals, which are replaced in every rebuild.

Cylinder rams should not be pitted, deformed or damaged in any way. Gongola says that only parts showing significant wear will be replaced, and further recommends if a problem is detected with one steering cylinder, it is wise to have both cylinders rebuilt or replaced at the same time. Latham Marine can even restore the cylinder's chrome plating, which Gongola says is more than just aesthetic cosmetics. "The plating helps protect against corrosion from saltwater, especially in older, brass-under-chrome steering rams," he adds, although since the early 90s, all Latham steering systems have been made from stainless steel.

2. Now check the inside.

Check the steering fluid level-- The fluid level in the power steering reservoir should remain constant from a cold engine start to shut down after the engine is well warmed. "If the fluid level drops at cold start," Gongola warns, "it indicates air in the system which should be bled off." If you want to do the work yourself, a call to Latham can help you learn what to do to correct this problem—if not, see a specialist.

Latham steering, even full hydraulic systems, use *standard automatic transmission fluid*. The reasons are simple: it's inexpensive, widely available and different brands can be mixed without concern—something that can't be done with *hydraulic fluid*, according to Gongola who advises that the fluid should be a "healthy red color, not discolored in any way." If it is dark, thick or sludgy, call Tom and he can provide some advice on fluid draining and replacement.

Make sure to check the power steering pump belts for wear, cracking and proper tension.

Also, remember your filters—most should be replaced after about 100 hours, depending on the type or use of the boat. Any time the system is serviced, it's a good idea to replace the filter.

3. Now you can start the boat up—"It is always better to avoid having problems *in* the water by doing your preliminary checks *out* of the water," Gongola emphasizes. As you start out slowly and evaluate the steering, make sure the steering is operating "as usual." Under engine power, turn the wheel fully left-to-right. Does it feel "normal?" are there any strange noises, or does anything feel differently than it did?

Latham Marine can rebuild a steering cylinder starting at around \$250-350 and up, depending on the condition and if any part replacement is necessary. Gongola notes this is "an inexpensive way to maintain or even improve the performance of your boat," reminding that a "steering failure while underway can lead to a *very bad day* on the water."

As part of its regular inspection routine, Latham will disassemble and totally refit the entire steering ram, from draining the fluid, pulling the cylinder, checking the rod and clevis ends, remove and replace the seals, scraper and o-rings and cleaning and honing the internal surface of the ram, polish it, and if it is pitted, replace the rod. Latham will perform a complete pressure test for proper operation and return the ram to the customer, ready to re-install.

For more information, call 800-422-RAMS (7267) or visit www.lathammarine.com.
Latham Marine has been steering customers straight for over 35 years, so insist on
genuine Latham Marine parts.

#