

BOAT REPAIRS: DON'T GET SOAKED

Trap

The sun was shining, and the seas were calm, but Jake's boat engine wouldn't start. Jake called a friend who knew someone who worked on boats. The "mechanic" came to Jake's house and looked at the engine. He said the fuel filter was bad, and the carburetor needed to be rebuilt. Jake paid \$400 and waited a few weeks to get the parts. The mechanic installed the parts and declared the boat ready to go. Unfortunately, 10 miles out to sea, Jake had the same problem. This time the engine wouldn't start, and Jake had to pay \$200 to get the boat towed to the marina.

Tips

The International Boat Show ended on the last Sunday in March. Events like this provide a great opportunity to learn more about keeping boats shipshape. Here are some tips:

- Florida does not require "boat mechanics" to be certified in marine repairs.
- The Motor Vehicle Repair Act does not include boat repairs, and mechanics are not required to provide a written estimate before beginning repairs. You should request a detailed written estimate with a specific bottom-line dollar amount.
- Visit the shop first, and inspect it for cleanliness and organization. Determine how long the shop has been in business by checking for a business tax receipt.
- Before contacting a marine repair shop, know what type of engine you have, and ask if any of the technicians are factory trained. Be prepared to explain your specific problem (i.e. hard start, no start or running/idling rough).
- Consider membership in a boat or fishing club. Ask members for references.
- Is the business insured? Consider the liability if someone gets hurt on your property.

For more information, call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray residents call 1-888-852-7362 toll free)