



# Critical Issues

Allotting time for a post-survey recap is a vital step in the boat-buying process.

**A**ctive survey days can run long on time. However, if you can plan to set aside 30 minutes to an hour at the end, it is an ideal time to review the priority issues that your surveyor discovered. Combing through any trawler from bow to stern to test, operate and inspect systems and equipment takes a full day or more. Surveyors and diesel mechanics can do a better job if they are not interrupted, and they simply can't do their job if they stop and show you each time they notice a potential issue.

Surveyors take photos, write notes and generally poke, probe and observe just about everything from the moment they step on board. In our experience, the best surveyors prefer to compile all of the details in their write-up before presenting their findings, so as not to forget something significant. Most surveyors need the sanity of their office environment without distractions to prepare their report, which is the document that buyers need to share with insurance and financiers to move forward with the boat purchase.

For buyers, it is beneficial to sit down and discuss the surveyor's primary concerns while the notes are still fresh. It's much more meaningful when the surveyor can actually show you a critical issue. By attending the survey, you will already know much of what has occurred during the day, but the wrap-up session is the best way for you to be aware of problems.

To get the most out of your survey, prepare in advance by writing down notes and questions that you can refer to during the recap. Having the owner on board is also helpful to cut through the trial and error of things such as audiovisual systems that oftentimes are hard to power up. After that, the end-of-day recap is an opportunity for you as the buyer to ask questions that you may have been holding back.

The surveyor will likely say that he's providing a punch list

based on memory, and that it is not fully inclusive. The written report will have all the details and is worth waiting for, but owners can start planning and getting quotes for repairs if they leave the boat armed with information about problem findings.

During the debrief, I suggest inviting the owner and listing broker to sit in on the recap with the surveyor. The recap is not the time for the selling side to argue or defend, but instead to listen and observe. If there are findings based on something not working, there could be a plausible explanation. Even better, on critical, damaged or broken items, all parties can see what the surveyor has found. The seller can think about fixing the issues or working with you to find a reasonable resolution to move forward with the boat's sale.

Engine room items such as collapsed engine mounts or exhaust-fitting pinhole leaks are not something most buyers or sellers know to worry about. Remember: The surveyor's priority is to determine the vessel's health regarding safety and operations. Findings and recommendations may also apply to deferred maintenance. The U.S. Coast Guard requirements need to be on board (and not expired), and the vessel will be viewed with an eye to conformity for voluntary standards from experts like the American Boat and Yacht Council. On some occasions, the builder installs something incorrectly, but often, problems occur because of neglect or natural wear and tear.

All of these findings will then be reviewed by the insurance broker, who needs to render approval to bind coverage on the vessel. The insurance company may request that safety and critical items are addressed promptly.

Leaving for the day with a good idea of the major issues will help any buyer stay on schedule, start working on service quotes and negotiate changes on the boat's price to make corrections. 🌟

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