

May/June 1985

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BOAT

Pennsylvania



The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

GETTING THE LEAD OUT



Gene Spori
Assistant Executive Director
Bureau of Waterways
Pennsylvania Fish Commission

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently adopted regulations that will reduce the lead content in gasoline from 1.2 grams per gallon to .5 grams per gallon by July 1, 1985. To comply with the regulations, the lead content of gasoline would be further reduced to .1 gram per gallon by January 1, 1986.

Boat engines typically require a high octane fuel (88 or more). In the past, lead was used to boost octane ratings. But lead doesn't burn completely in your engine, and what doesn't burn is exhausted into the atmosphere. Lead has been linked to high blood pressure, nerve disorders, and mental retardation. Studies have indicated that annually some 125,000 people are affected by lead, primarily in urban areas where motor vehicle congestion prevails. It was incumbent upon EPA to force users to a "new" fuel.

There are alternatives to lead as an octane booster, the most common of which are methanol, ethanol, and a manganese compound known as MMT. The primary disadvantage of these additives for most people is that they add about 2 cents to the price of a gallon of gasoline. For the boater, the added cost is not nearly as important as the corrosive effects these additives, particularly the alcohols, have on boat engines and fuel systems. Most newer boats are built with equipment that withstands the corrosive tendencies of alcohol-blended fuels, but older boats have no protection. Evidence concerning the effects of alcohol mixes on boat engines and fuel systems is mixed, but there is enough evidence to warrant caution.

One of the problems caused by alcohol in gasoline is the deterioration of synthetic fuel lines, because all such lines absorb a certain amount of gasoline. Lines constructed of material not designed to carry alcohol tend to absorb more alcohol and gasoline, leading to premature failure.

Those of you who have been around boats for any length of time are fully aware of the danger of fuel leaks. Gasoline vapors fill every nook and cranny in a boat. Most basic boating courses teach you to ventilate your boat before starting it, and indeed, federal and state regulations require natural and in some cases power ventilation. Still, many people do not take the extra precaution of checking for fumes. Removing lead from gasoline might at first seem only remotely connected to explosion and fire on board boats. Still, the relationship is there.

Before operation, turn on your blowers, open your engine compartment, and use the best anti-explosive device available to you—your nose. Visually inspect your entire fuel system and sniff out evidence of any leaks. Replace any part of your fuel system at the first sign of deterioration. Don't take chances. Just take a little more care and have a bit more respect for your fuel.

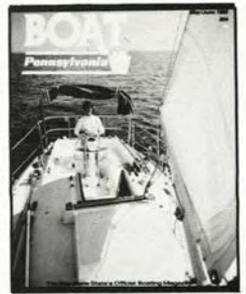
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Spori". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark ink on a light background.

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On this month's front cover is Kathleen Stager at the helm of the family Sabre 30. For the cruising details on the Delaware River, see page 4, and if buying a boat is your interest, don't miss the sound advice on page 8.



Cruising chronicle page 4



Strengthening skills page 24



Buying boats page 8



Teaching teens page 26

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Cruising the Delaware River

by Tom Reinke and Ed Rogowski

Recreational boating on the Delaware dates from the mid-1800s, so the history—and the outlook—are colorful and bright 4

Buy that Family Boat!

by Eric B. Burnley

If you're shopping around for a new or previously owned craft, don't miss this useful advice 8

What Will Those Lake Erie Divers Find Next?

by Jack Grazier

Lake Erie has its share of Edmund Fitzgeralds, as local divers are finding out. Uncover this rich history with the author 11

Lake Wallenpaupack!

by Joe Greene

This waterway offers Pennsylvanians just about everything in water recreation, and here's the complete lowdown on how best to enjoy it 14

Teaching Boating Safety and Water Safety Skills

by Janet R. Mayer

The Fish Commission offers a thorough, comprehensive program for teaching and learning safety, and there's something here for every boater 18

Water Skiing Basics

by Bruce Kistler

With this no-nonsense explanation, you can become a better water skier 24

Canoeing with Teenagers

by Cliff Jacobson

Leading a group of teenaged canoeists presents problems that the author helps you solve, and pleasures that the author lets you discover 26

Viewpoint	2
Currents	20
The Law & You	20
Calendar	21
Safety	22

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