

THE MAREP REPORT

Fall Cruising

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Early Fall gives us some of the neatest boating opportunities of the year. The marine byways are relatively uncrowded and the weather conditions often clear, dry and still. However, even if you are venturing no further than your favorite Indian Arm or Howe Sound anchorage, pay attention to the impact of overnight changes between sea and land breezes.

You will remember from the Boating Course that heating of the land during the day gives rise to sea breezes – or on-shore winds. The reverse happens at night. In the early Fall, there is still lots of power in the midday sun, so often land temperatures in the back country are not that much lower than they are during the summer. At night, however, temperatures drop much lower than they do during mid-summer, and thus create some local high pressure conditions, with heavy cold air just waiting to go somewhere. Where it goes is down the valleys of the mainland inlets – often with locally gale force strength created by the venturi-type topography (a gale is greater than 34 knots if you have forgotten).

These conditions can happen even with forecasted clear weather, and with stable barometric pressures. They are an excellent illustration of how our local topographic and circulation conditions can put the lie to forecasts created for much wider areas.

So if you are in your favorite cove and protected from the light to moderate southerly winds which have been blowing through the day, make sure you are also protected from a much stronger wind from the north which could ruin your sleep. Try setting your anchor with that in mind, remember the length of scope rule, and put out a stern tie to share the load. This is doubly important if you are part of a multi-vessel raft. That wall of fiberglass is one big sail! Also, if a 180-degree wind shift could be in the cards, think about the impact of the overnight change in tidal direction and speed. Your anchor may be adequate for a 25-knot wind, but will it also cope with a chop, and a 4-knot tidal current as well? As the Piloting Course teaches us – your working anchor should be good for a 30-knot wind. You may have exceeded this capability in the above example.

I observed a classic case of exactly this situation not long ago in Bedwell. A three-vessel raft in the centre of the Bay set **one** anchor in the afternoon for a moderate southerly wind and no stern tie -- and then had to contend with a 20+ knot northerly outflow wind and a tidal inflow at 0200 hours. There was noise, clamour, lights, clanking chains, and general travail while the flotilla merrily dragged down the bay. Not a swift display.

As we say in the bike world – keep the shiny side up!

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