



Mike Levy:
Let's Get The Safety Gear Organised for Summer . . . Now.

We all know it is vital. This gear could save our lives - and the loved ones we take with us during our adventures on the water. Going through the safety checklist, updating the flares, replacing the batteries, chucking out that old torch - and very carefully inspecting the resident life jackets is a job that takes perhaps an hour and half, once or twice a year. **Nothing** is more important.

Over a many years I have observed that too many skippers pay only cursory attention to their flare and safety equipment storage. We regularly hear of people out of fuel, with engine problems or vessel swamping (forgot the bungs again?), yet few make the effort to rationalize, consolidate and equip their emergency supplies.

You owe it to yourself, and your family, to give yourself the best possible chance in an environment that so quickly turns hostile.

The picture (right) shows three types of emergency equipment containers commonly available, providing a range of options from small tinnies to ocean going palaces. Being concerned mainly with vessels in the range of 3 to 7 metres, the mid-size container seems most likely to be acceptable. The small "flare" container is limited to a basic pack of offshore flares, and inadequately at that, as it is just a little too short for the parachutes. The large container can hold an enormous amount, but we need to keep things in perspective! If you fill it up it's difficult to stow and manoeuvre; if it isn't full, it's a waste of space!

If using the mid-size plastic container, what sort of things might we include? The picture shows just what can be stored (seepic next page), but you will modify this to your peculiar circumstances.

I personally like to carry as many flares as possible, rarely disposing of any out of date. If you have the opportunity, firing the older flares first (which last many years if they retain their seals) provides an extra margin of safety. Mark their expiry dates plainly on the packages. If you live in a remote area it is entirely possible you could be marooned on a hot and unforgiving coast, at least for some period until rescue.

I like to include first aid basics and concentrated food tablets, as well as fishing gear, knife, light and shelter, but in abbreviated survival type form. I also carry a small double mess tin kit containing fire lighting gear (Vaseline, cotton balls, starters, matches, gas lighter).

It is difficult to include more than a token amount of water in these containers so I carry it separately, along with some other items I will

mention shortly.

I also occasionally hunt furry animals, and am a bit pedantic about continuing to live a bit longer, so in practice I also carry in my console storage a medium transparent Plano "grab" box with a lid seal. This contains the hand held VHF and GPS, a range finder, LED torch, an emergency broadcast radio (wind up, solar and battery), a multi tool and

spare batteries. This saves duplication in the vehicle, as I can grab it when needed. My survival kit in the car, as you can imagine, is also "sufficient".

Rotate degradable gear in your container regularly - 6 monthly is reasonable. Batteries, food, water and plastics all deteriorate, particularly in the harsh conditions encountered in a boat. Embarrassing

