



**Capt. Bennie Ficarrotta**

USCG Licensed Captain

ASA Certified Instructor

*Seafarers Way*

SeaFarersWay@gmail.com

727-412-1765

**SHOULD I STAY, OR SHOULD I GO?!**

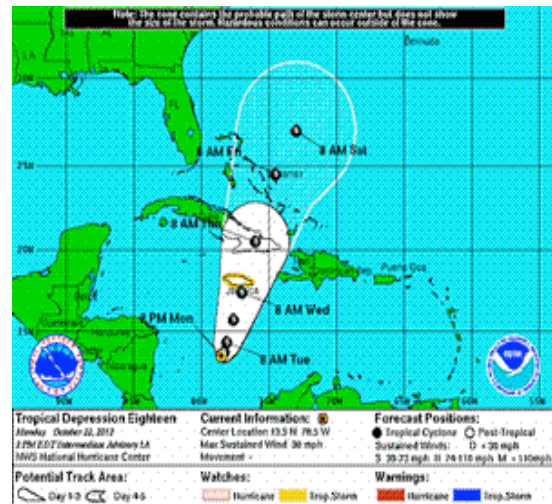
(Four questions that will help you decide)

This has probably been the foremost question that mariners have asked themselves since we first thought about taking a trip in a boat.

The reason why this question is so important is that you don't want to run into weather that is so bad that it will cause injury to yourself or your crew or it will cause your boat to sink.

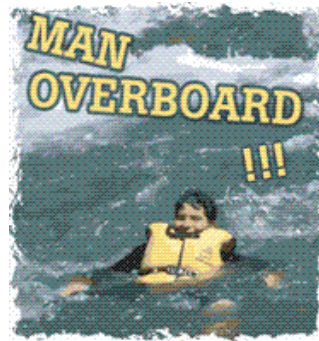
So, we look at the sky in the morning and at night ("Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning! Red sky at night, sailors delight!"). We look for white caps past the inlet. We dutifully study cloud formations... and... we log on to the NOAA, Weather Channel, or local news station websites, or fire up the XM weather option on our chart plotters and have immediate access to tons of weather information and interpretations of that information by meteorologists around the world.

But, once you've taken into account all of the weather information available, you still ask yourself, with some level of trepidation, "Should I stay, or should I go?" After all, we know that the accuracy of any weather forecast is not known to be highly accurate or reliable. I've gone out based on NOAA Marine Forecast that boasted easterly winds between 10 and 15 knots only to find myself in 20 to 30 knots of a northerly blow.



So, rather than just ask myself the age-old Stay-or-Go question, I like to ask myself four different questions before I decide to leave the anchorage or when I find myself in unexpected rapidly deteriorating conditions.

1. Can the boat take it? Is the weather such that the boat will broach or come apart and sink? If there is a good chance that the boat will not be able to withstand the conditions, the decision is easy. Don't go, or go to a safe harbor immediately.



2. Can YOU take it? Let's say that the answer to the first question was, "Yes", the boat can absolutely handle the expected or current weather conditions. But, can you and/or your crew handle the conditions? Elderly crew, non-sailors or injured crew may find themselves in an extremely dangerous or even in a life threatening situation. If you or your crew can't take it, don't go or head to safety immediately.

3. Do you HAVE TO take it? If you are already in a safe harbor, I can't imagine too many situations where you would be forced to choose to head out into extremely foul weather. If you're already underway, but there is no turning back and no nearby safe harbor, then you may be forced to press on. The key to avoiding this scenario is to do as much weather homework as possible BEFORE you leave.





**4. Do you WANT to take it? You can find yourself in a situation where... 1. The boat CAN take it, 2. YOU can take it, and 3. You don't HAVE TO take it... but, maybe you just don't WANT to get beat up for ten hours. If so, don't go or go back.**

**Unless you really enjoy the excitement of the dangers that the elements can throw at you, it is absolutely well worth delaying your trip by a couple of days or so in order to make way in safer weather conditions.**

**As my sailing mentor, Dan, reminded me the other day, there are old sailors and there are bold sailors. I'd rather be remembered as the old sailor who kept on sailing into his nineties rather than the bold sailor who was last seen heading into a hurricane.**

