

Safe carriage of yachts on deck



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Yachts can easily be carried on deck with little risk of harm, when properly and safely secured. This article outlines some key checks to ensure safe passage.

Pleasure yachts are frequently carried as deck cargo. This may be to deliver a new yacht from the builder to the owner or because the owners wish to reposition their yacht in a new cruising ground without undertaking a long ocean passage.

Unfortunately, there have been many cases of yachts being seriously damaged during a passage, as a result of being badly secured on deck.

Badly designed cradles, inadequate support for the hull and keel, and incorrect use of chain lashings and webbing straps can all contribute to damage. This can include chafing, damage to the yacht's hull and fittings, or even serious structural damage, particularly if the vessel carrying it experiences heavy weather.



- **Cradles** should be designed to support the full length of the yacht. Short cradles designed for use in a boat yard are unlikely to be adequate. Cradles should comply with the **IMO International Convention for Safe Containers (CSC)** if the yacht is to be treated as containerised cargo.
- **Keels** should be fully supported. Wooden blocks should usually be avoided as these can move during heavy weather. Screw type jacks with a soft wooden pad between the boat and the jack are preferable.
- **Frames** should be fully supported longitudinally and thwart ships to maximise the amount of friction to prevent slippage.
- **Lashings** to support cradles and frames should be robust, with chain lashings preferable. These should be fixed at a sufficient angle to prevent movement of the frame.
- **Boat mooring line cleats** are designed to secure the boat when it is moored in a marina where there is little or no swell and very little force is exerted on them. These will not normally be strong enough to withstand the forces imparted on them should the vessel encounter heavy weather and rough sea states. Lashings that completely cross the yacht from side to side will avoid the need to use cleats.
- **Soft webbing straps** are often used to offer protection to the hull and reduce the risk of chafing. Unfortunately, they can stretch and come loose and can flutter in high wind, causing chafing. Felt or foam pads can be positioned between the strap and the surface of the craft's hull as protection.
- **Chains** provide better rigid tension than webbing straps and should be used in combination. Short webbing straps should be used to connect to attachment points on the yacht. These can then be tensioned and secured with chains down to the deck/cradle.
- **Plastic protectant** Shrink-wrapping the yacht will help to protect the yacht from chafe as well as from dust, soot from the vessel's funnel and bird droppings.

Pleasure yachts can be safely carried as deck cargo if properly secured. The IMO code of practice for stowage and securing of cargo, and the vessel's cargo securing manual should be followed at all times to avoid risk of damage.