

WARRANTY

The one thing you bear keep mind when discussing boat warranties is that it bears absolutely no resemblance to an automotive warranty.

In my experience manufacturers can be unpredictable when it comes to honoring their own warranty claim, just take the following two very different scenarios:

“Lucky” boat owner #1: While sounding the hull of a small pleasure boat built by an established national brand I discovered a hull defect. My client was the third owner of an 8 year-old boat. I telephoned the builders production manager and explained what I had found. His reaction was to let me recommend a repair shop and the manufacturer would cover the bill. One week later the new owner was back boating and the shop was paid.

“Not so lucky” boat owner #2: At an owners request I inspected the cracked hull of a small pleasure boat built by an established national company. The six- foot crack turned out to be seperated fiberglass layers that had never been properly applied. Interview with the original owner of this 3 year-old boat produced a tragic tail. It seems that over year ago he discovered the crack and the builder made him transport the boat at his cost to their factory for repair. After the boat sat at the factory for 8 months (while making payments on it every month) he was told to come get his boat, they weren’t going to fix it because they think he hit something. He hit nothing, certainly nothing hard enough to cause a six- foot crack. It takes 8 months to say they are not going to fix it?

Both repairs were worth about \$3000 when first discovered.

Both warranties read very much alike.

What is a warranty? In general terms a new boat warranty covers the hull structure and fitted equipment for a short period of time against all failures at no cost to the owner. This is the honeymoon stage. The engine is almost always warranty supported by the engine builder, not the boat builder (dealer) for its own failure modes and time periods. Most engine warranties are pretty good, or at least consistent. At some point, lets call it one year from new purchase, all the little stuff failures aboard may need to be warranted against the little stuff manufacturers individually. The boat owner will be responsible for labor, travel, etc.

The Hull warranty is described, again in broad strokes, as covering the construction of the boat itself. Typically cosmetic voids, blemishes, scratches, osmotic blisters, crazing, and cracking of the gel coat are not covered after the honeymoon.

Generally when you discover a problem with your boat that you believe to covered by warranty the dealer or builder will decide whether or not it’s actually covered and to what extent. Some builders / dealers respond better than others when faced with a warranty claim. In some cases the opinion of a qualified marine surveyor is helpful in determining the true cause and origin of the problem as well as suggesting a suitable method of repair. Remember also that smaller builders likely don’t have a “warranty fund”; any coverage they provide may be coming from current cash flow.

Caveat Emptor