

Marine and Boat Security

With the continued popularity of recreational boating, the theft of boats and marine-related equipment is a crime prevention concern in many areas of the country. Vandalism and petty theft also occur.

Like residential and business crime prevention, marine crime prevention is primarily a matter of identifying potential risks and taking appropriate measure to eliminate or minimize them.

The following are a series of crime prevention recommendations for marine areas and boats.

- Access to boats should be limited only to owners and other authorized person.
- The general public should not be allowed unescorted access to marinas.
- Locked gates and other barriers to both pedestrian and vehicle traffic should be installed at every dock entrance.
- Signs that clearly state marina regulations and access limits should be posted prominently.
- Good lighting should be focused upon access points and boat docks.
- It is recommended that a “Marina Watch” program patterned after “Neighborhood Watch” be developed. Boat owners should be encouraged to report suspicious persons and activities and violations of marina policies. Boat owners should be further encouraged to get to know their dockside neighbors.

Locks

- Install inside hinges and deadbolt locks on all doors.
- Secure ports and windows with inside auxiliary locks.
- Attach inverted strong hasps and padlocks to all hatches.
- Lockers should be secured with non-removable hasps and hinges and secured with strong padlocks.

Operation Identification

- Engrave all valuables (electronic equipment, engines, sails, radios and other loose gear) with the owner’s name, home port, state driver’s license or identification number and the boat’s hull identification number.
- Maintain an inventory list ashore of all boat gear. Include name, model, serial number, manufacturer and description.

Alarm Systems

- Alarm systems should be specifically designed for marine use. Because of the damp marine environment, alarm sensors and electronics must be properly protected.
- Boat owners should activate alarm systems every time they leave their boat.

Additional Tips

- Never leave keys aboard a boat — even in a “hidden place.”

- Always moor a boat to something secure with a chain or cable that cannot be lifted over or torn loose from the piling or mooring.
- Run the chain or cable around under a thwart or around a stanchion.
- Use one-way bolts, lock nuts, and backup plates on eye bolts.
- Consider leaving a boat's engine out of commission when left unattended — remove the rotor; install a hidden cut-off switch; drain the fuel; remove a spark plug or the propeller.
- Secure outboard motors with special transom bolts or clamping screw locks.

If You Are a Victim

- If a boat owner is the victim of a theft, vandalism or other criminal offense, they should be advised to quickly notify the appropriate law enforcement agency and possibly the Coast Guard.
- When notifying a law enforcement agency of a theft or criminal offense, provide a complete and detailed description of what was stolen — including the boat's hull identification number, year, model, CF registration number, etc.