**Scandal or scaremongering?**

Pressure is mounting to change the ISO standard on seacocks, following YM’s five-month long ‘Safe Seacocks’ campaign. Editor Paul Gelder reports

During the last five months of our campaign, Yachting Monthly and Mr Stevens have been accused of scaremongering and sensationalism. A dodgy surveyor and a bunch of journalists looking for a headline, said one commentator. Many accusers came, as expected, from within the industry - including one boatbuilder who admitted using brass. Others, including boat-builders, praised Mr Stevens for improving the issue and getting everyone talking about seacocks - as well as checking them. The Cruising Association backed our campaign. Our online chat forum, Scuttlebutt, was cast into its body. That’s half the time span stipulated by insurance companies for replacing your rigging.

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*Yachting Monthly* 

**A dodgy surveyor and a bunch of journalists looking for a headline?**

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RYA’s Cruising Manager, Stuart Carruthers

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**TeCHNICAL INVESTIGATION**

The acid test: A dodgy seacock can cause an electrolytic corrosion. Electrolytic corrosion is caused by the interaction of two different metals. The metal with the higher electrochemical potential will corrode. For example, brass corrodes more quickly than copper. But it is not just the metal that is important. The environment is also crucial. A seacock with a brass core and a copper exterior will corrode rapidly. The corrosion will cause the seacock to fail. This will happen gradually, or it can happen overnight.

**Bronze, dezincification-resistant brass, is the only material recommended for seaworthiness.**

Vincent: ‘I understand that at least two big European boat-builders have changed their seacock suppliers. And now the RYA’s Cruising Manager, Stuart Carruthers, has stated: “I believe there is enough concern now to warrant a review of the standard and to remove any ambiguity from the wording of the ISO standard.”

**Conclusion**

Ensure the vast majority of silver coloured ball valves with red handles. Most are ordinary brass. In the absence of electrolytic action, they may be alright. But these measure up to the standard of 02R so why take the risk? 02R and bronze (Blakes seacocks) are approved. Anything else, apart from Marine plastic seacocks, is suspect.

For Essential seacock checks visit our website (www.yachtingmonthly.com) and click on YM PLUS

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**GYGFF: Marolin plastic seacocks are increasingly popular**

**RIGHT:** Yacht surveyor Paul Stevens, YM’s ‘whistleblower’

Scandal or scaremongering?

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**JUNE 2011** Yacht surveyor Paul Stevens warns that boats could be in danger of sinking if through-hull fittings made of brass are not renewed.

**JUNE 2011** What on earth are we doing using an inferior material for vital fittings below the waterline? A five year service life is not acceptable.

**JULY 2011** YM’s campaign is backed by the Cruising Association, Britain’s leading organisation for sailors with more than 3,500 members.

**SUMMER 2011** Nigel Sisu, an advisor to the EC’s Recreational Craft Directive, says standards could be changed if evidence shows failures occurred.

**AUGUST 2011** YM sent a failed seacock from a three-year-old Hanse 490 for analysis. Severe electrolytic corrosion is suspected cause of failure.

**AUGUST 2011** Spanish sailor Julio Sainzuan described how electrolytic corrosion caused a through-hull fitting to fail off the outside of the hull of his 40ft ketch.

**SEPTEMBER 2011** Reader Paul Christie says: I hope Nigel Sisu, who had the courage to raise his opinion, is successful in changing the RCD’s ridiculous stance.

**SEPTEMBER 2011** Metallurgist Vico Cox discovers how difficult it is to average yachtman to find out if his seacocks are safe or suspect.