

BOAT AND YACHT THEFT PREVENTION

Make your vessel a “hard target” by reducing vulnerability and criminal opportunity

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The biggest vulnerability that a vessel faces is its “portability”. Simply put, a vessel, whether in the water or on a trailer, is at risk because it can be snatched away if the bad guys are given the opportunity. This makes all unprotected vessels “soft targets”.

Vessels are high value assets with a good risk vs. reward ratio. Think about it from the criminal’s point of view. A \$100,000 sport-boat will bring an easy \$15,000 to \$25,000 dollars on the black market with very little risk to the criminal. All the marine criminal has to do is pre-arrange a buyer, find a suitable target, and wait until the time is right. He snatches the boat and delivers it to his buyer in another country before the owner realizes it has been stolen. Very little, if any, law enforcement investigation will take place.

The average bank robbery normally nets the criminal less than \$15,000. The risk is very high, and the ensuing investigation is extremely thorough and almost all bank robbers get caught, eventually. So when you look at it this way, it is easy to discern the difference in the respective risk vs. reward ratios.

Your goal is to make your vessel a “hard target”. A criminal looks for vulnerability and opportunity when selecting a target. If you make your vessel less vulnerable you will reduce opportunity. This will make your vessel a less desirable target and the marine criminal will seek an easier victim.

The key to protecting a marine asset is to make it inaccessible

The least likely boats to be stolen are those that are stored in “rack and stack” buildings. This is because their access is limited by the storage method, but “rack and stack” is neither an option or a desire for most vessel owners. This leaves us with dockside, mooring, and trailer storage. These are all vulnerable to varying degrees and these vessels need their access limited or controlled in some way to prevent theft or burglary.

You can take measures yourself to make your vessel less accessible by following some of the simple security measures in this publication. Many require just a small effort and a little thoughtfulness, others are more complex. Any single one of them are better than doing nothing at all.



A boat is nothing more than an expensive “sitting duck”.

Dockside security tips:

- Try to keep them off or away from the boat!
- Use regular or motion sensor floodlights.
- Mount a security camera in a highly visible location. Even “fakes” work!
- Chain or cable your boat to the dock.
- Limit access with a security gate and fencing.

Securing your dock or mooring

As we've said, if you can restrict or limit access to your vessel, you will make it more secure. Use various security measures, not just one. Security measures are *obstacles* to the criminal. They increase the criminal's exposure time, something we like to refer to as “time on target”. More “time on target” means more chance of capture.

Overt (visible) security measures such as security lighting, locks, alarm warning signs, and security cameras usually will ward off the criminal before he strikes. These are known as *deterrent measures*, and they will likely cause him to seek an easier target, one with a better “risk vs. reward” ratio. The hidden onboard alarm won't keep them *off* the vessel, and keeping them *off* the vessel is your *primary*

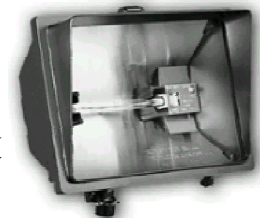
objective. Stopping them *after* they gain access is your *second objective*.



The water side approach of a vessel is often overlooked when securing a dock. Make sure neighbors are informed if you leave town.

The waterside approach of a vessel can be protected by highly visible security cameras on pilings or in an area where they can be seen by an approaching boat. Motion sensor flood lights on the water side of the vessel work great too!

Vessels kept on an mooring in an anchorage are at the most risk. They are prime easy pickings for even amateur criminals. Make these boats secure by making them look occupied. If you can't do that, use a locked chain or cable attached to the permanent mooring (if you have one), disable the engine, and get a LOUD alarm with a backup battery (along with good insurance).



The importance of security lighting

Good security lighting is the single most effective criminal deterrent because if there is one single thing that criminals hate most, it is lighting. A well lighted vessel will cause a criminal to seek an easier target, no doubt about it.

You can greatly reduce your vessel's vulnerability by illuminating it and the surrounding area so any would be trespassers will be exposed. This can be done by installing inexpensive floodlights. The floodlights should illuminate the dock or area where the vessel is kept so that they cause shadows to be cast when movement occurs in that area. This will allow

detection if the area is being observed by people or cameras.

Be careful when installing and aiming the lights. You want to avoid a situation where the lights hinder your detection abilities. Also make sure the lights don't interfere with other vessel traffic. Lights mounted high on poles or on the vessel itself work better than ground level lights, but any light is almost always better than no light!

Keeping your boat and trailer secure

Trailered boats are stolen more often than any other boat. Thieves have been able to back up to boats parked in residential driveways, storage lots, and marinas in broad daylight and steal them.

They are able to do this because not many folks would ever think that someone would have enough guts to steal a boat in broad daylight. It happens all the time! In some cases the thieves place fake magnetic signs on vehicles that read “Joes Outboards”, other times they

are in plain vehicles. The best way to reduce your chance of theft is to:

- Remove your hitch tongue from the trailer or have a removable one constructed.
- If the rims have slots or spokes, chain the wheels on both sides.
- Chain the trailer to another object.
- Remove at least one tire and wheel or buy a wheel lock device.
- Install a trailer theft alarm.
- Keep your neighbors informed.



Good security lighting is probably the single most effective criminal deterrent !

Securing your vessel

You need to secure the vessel itself in the event that a criminal is able to circumvent your dockside security measures. The criminal may only want to burglarize the vessel, so disabling the engine (s) is just one of several measures that need to be considered.

Good locks or multiple locks will delay or prevent access. Appearance and aesthetic concerns may preclude huge padlocks or New York style dead bolting. This is where a good alarm comes into play. Keep in mind that an alarm is only as good as it's response. If no one hears it or if it is ignored, it is useless (it may scare off some intruders though).

Motion sensors and pressure pad type alarms are the most common for marine use because they don't require a lot of wiring and switches.



Once criminals get inside the vessel, they can burglarize it or prepare to steal it without being seen.

Once access is gained, criminals can burglarize a boat at will. Boat tops (smaller vessels) and superstructures hide them once inside. If their mission is to steal the boat, they can remain inside "hot wiring" and waiting for the right time to get underway.

The installation of a secret kill switch or fuel shut off will prevent them from getting underway. Skilled marine criminals will easily circumvent these if they can remain hidden and have time. If you install a *time delay* kill switch or fuel shut off, they will get underway but the vessel will stop and the criminals may flee rather than risk fixing it. There are always the criminals who choose to *tow* their victims away. Keep them away by securing your dock or mooring. Do what you can to make them choose an easier target!

Good security is established through "layering"

Layering...what is it? Layering is the process of employing several different security measures. Each layer is designed to complement the other, yet it is capable of functioning on its own as well.

Imagine the concentric range rings of a RADAR display. Your boat is in the center and each ring represents a security layer. The outermost layer can represent the security gate which restricts access to your dock. The innermost layer may be the kill switch that you installed on your vessel. You may have as



many layers as you think you need made up of alarms, lights, security locks, etc. Even after getting through gates, alarms and locks, the criminal still keeps coming upon another security measure, or "layer".

They may get in, but they may not have enough time to figure out the final layer, the kill switch. Regardless of what they are, each layer has to be circumvented in a different way to gain access to, or steal your vessel. They cost the criminal valuable time! Get the picture? Don't rely on a single device.

You can stay secure and still remain "yacht friendly"!

The reason many folks don't like to get too serious about security in the recreational boating world is that they don't want to "spoil the fun". It makes sense if you think that security awareness is "paranoia". Yet it sounds like a lame excuse if you realize that security awareness is just as important on a vessel as it is anywhere else, even more so.



Being secure has nothing to do with paranoia or isolating yourself from other boaters. All

you need to do is realize that boats are prime targets of criminals in ANY location. You only need to take a few simple precautions to limit your vulnerability. This publication mentions nothing about staying away from other boaters or acting paranoid. Security doesn't have to be intrusive or overt to work.

A "security layering" example for a docked vessel:

- Secret fuel shut off or kill switch.
- Motion detector alarm on interior of vessel.
- Entry alarm on locked access doors and hatches.
- Well lighted dock area with motion sensor floodlights on vessel entry areas.
- Dock access gate.



Security layering is like adding rings of protection... They complement each other yet each one is independent of the other.

Always "backward plan" your security layers. First secure the boat, then progress to the dock and access area.

Special Ops Associates

1500 SE 3rd Court
Suite 103
Deerfield Beach, Florida USA
33441

Phone: 954-426-9377
Fax: 954-252-3921

Email: staff@specialopsassociates.com

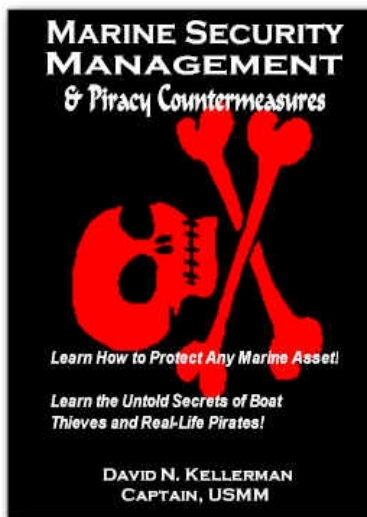
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This publication is presented by **Special Ops Associates**, a full service maritime security and investigative agency operating in South Florida. They are the creators and sponsors of the internationally acclaimed MaritimeSecurity.com website.

Special Ops Associates has 15+ years of licensed maritime service. In addition to recovering stolen and missing vessels, **Special Ops Associates** offers self-defense and anti-piracy training services to ship and yacht crew along with armed protection services for vessels and marine facilities. To learn more, visit the **Special Ops Associates** website at www.specialopsassociates.com

Another similar informational publication titled "*Hostile Boardings*" is available. It deals with preventing and managing unauthorized and/or hostile intruders while aboard. Visit maritimesecurity.com to order a copy!



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If you desire more information on protecting your vessel, you need this book!

This book will teach you:

- Why law enforcement is powerless in combating vessel theft.
- How "unconventional" crimes threaten you and your vessel.
- How to harden your vessel with physical security measures.

- How to protect your vessel and yourself while cruising...no matter where you are at.
- What firearms to carry, and when NOT to carry them... Plus Much More!

Written by Captain David N. Kellerman, a leading authority on the protection and recovery of high value marine assets. He is a licensed private investigator and maritime security consultant who has recovered millions of dollars in missing and stolen vessels...he literally steals boats back from those who stole them (over 400 vessel recoveries from 11 countries!). His 15+ years of maritime experience, combined with the knowledge gained from nearly 20 years as a member of the U.S. Army Special Forces, gives him a unique insight into protecting any high-value asset.

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