

Be secure on board

Darrel Walters, Managing Director of LocksOnline offers some tips

It is very easy to get complacent when it comes to security on boats. Everyone is enjoying themselves in a relaxed environment, for example as I sat at a pub recently, having my meal, I was surprised to see boats mooring up and people walking off straight into the pub. The only thing stopping someone climbing on board was a few inches of water between the bank and the boat. A person can jump onto your boat and make off with your personal items in a matter of minutes. Not to mention the two mooring lines that could be quickly undone, engine started and before you have ordered your drinks the boat is gone. You may suggest that they could not get far with the speed restrictions etc., but, especially on rivers, the boat can go a lot faster than you can walk. All the thieves are really interested in doing is getting the boat away from you so they can go through your possessions in their own time.

The main physical security is obviously the locks on the cabin doors and hatches, but these can be quite feeble. Many people use normal ironmongery and house-locking products. We always suggest that you consider yourself to be a burglar: how easy would it be for you to get into the cabin on your boat? If it is easy for you to bypass the locks on your doors or hatches then it would be even easier for a burglar. Having a nautical background myself and over twenty years' experience in locksmithing, I have been around a lot of boats and understand the principles of hatch and door security. We have a range of small narrow locks that suit the small doors that you

find on many canal and river boats. Hatches are another key area where security needs to be administered: there are hundreds of different types of locking arrangements and most are only 16 or 18 mm thick if you are lucky. Hasps may be the only way you have of securing hatches: perhaps the multi-link hasp and staples may be the preferred choice - having the dexterity of the joints allows the hasp and staple to cover a multitude of different locking possibilities. We also have marine locks for hatches that may suit your needs, or there are alarms that can be fitted to boats that help complement the physical security of locks on the cabin doors and hatches.

You may think that your boat is as safe as houses on a mooring or in a marina, but it is amazing the amount of kit that you can have on a boat - not that dissimilar to our sheds and garages at home. Take a look around your boat and start counting up the bit and pieces on it: anchor £60, life jackets £70 apiece, perhaps an outboard motor £350, music players, TV - the list just keep mounting up. To keep all these things safe, the best thing to do is to ensure that they are stored securely under lock and key within the cabin. But some things, like the anchor, cannot be stored in a locker, so make sure they are secured to the boat.

If you have concerns about security on your boat and want a bit of advice, drop me an email or give us a call. There is always a solution that can be adopted. But it starts with being alert and not getting complacent about security: 'locks are useless until used'.

LocksOnline

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Darrel is offering a 5% discount to NABO members (Coupon code: NABO13)

Padlock love

- The preferred choice is weatherproof padlocks that have either a bronze or a stainless steel shackle.
- If possible use a disc-type padlock, a closed shackle padlock or one with a straight shackle (shutter locks) that can't be opened with a hammer.
- Don't be a skinflint with your padlocks: make sure they are a reputable brand and that the shackle is secured on both sides. Be prepared to spend at least £20 or more per padlock; anything less and you will be hitting it open with a hammer when it has rusted up
- If you have a number of lockers and end up having several padlocks on board, it may be better to consider having them keyed alike, so that you have one key for them all.
- Remember also that padlocks love to be used, lock and unlock them all the time and maintain them (not with WD40 - use a silicon-based dry lubricant).