

PBO

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING BOATING MAGAZINE

No. 607 DECEMBER 2016

Practical Boat Owner®

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TESTED

Security systems
Bilge cleaners

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Dufour 350 tested
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Old GRP: can we recycle it?



Marine security systems

Ben Meakins assesses a variety of security systems intended to deter boat theft and bring much-needed peace of mind to the sailing fraternity

You secure your house, and secure your car, with locks, keys and alarms – but the next most expensive thing you'll ever own is, in some cases, about as easy to break into as a garden shed.

You can invest in a good padlock – see our test last year in PBO 593 – or a simple screamer alarm to put thieves off, but for true peace of mind, how about a system that can let you know what's going on and allow you to monitor your boat on her mooring? There are plenty available: most are based on SMS (text messaging), but a new generation of systems are emerging which are based on



Get alerts and check your boat's status from anywhere via phone apps

mobile data, maintaining a constant connection with a server.

The major advantage of any of these systems is that they will

allow you to monitor your boat when you are away – looking at bilge water levels, hatch openings, position reports and

all sorts of other functions. There are lots of products available that you can install in your boat to make it more secure – but how do they work? We tried out a few of those available in the UK, from SMS and internet-connected systems to simple standalone burglar alarms...

How we tested them

We fitted the systems temporarily on my Impala 28, *Polly*, installing the relevant apps on my phone and hooking up the websites. This done, we set off each sensor in turn, seeing what the response was via text, email and online.

Watching Man

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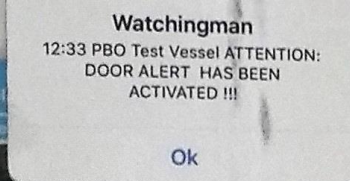
Newly imported by Echomaster Marine, the Watching Man system was developed by Spanish company Marine Instruments. It allows remote monitoring via website or app, connecting via GSM. Two versions are available: the basic system, which only includes the antenna module, simply requires a power supply – and it has an internal battery – should the power be cut. The antenna includes a GPS sensor, as well as a GPRS

chip to communicate with the outside world. This one will monitor battery state and the vessel's position.

The full model adds up to 15 sensors to the system. These sensors are wireless and standalone, requiring no wiring, each being powered by an

internal CR2 lithium battery, which cost around £2 each and should last a season. You can add a door/hatch sensor, PIR presence detector, water sensor for bilge level alarms and a temperature sensor for the engine.

The Watching Man system allows remote monitoring via website or app, connecting via GSM



We found this the easiest of all the systems on test to set up

A subscription is required, which is valid across Europe – one year's subscription is included in the purchase cost, but further years cost €100 a year for unlimited data. Email and text alerts are also an option.

We found this the easiest of all the systems to set up – and pairing the sensors was simple with their batteries inserted. The website gives full control of the Watching Man, and you can toggle alerts for all the sensors as well as monitoring their data. The internal GPS was accurate, and the internal battery effective:

with power cut, we removed it from the boat and walked away – and the alerts quickly followed, warning us that power had been cut, that the hatch sensor had been opened and then that the vessel was on the move. A live map showed the position.

VERDICT An impressive web-based system which offers a constantly updated 'at a glance' monitoring dashboard. It comes at a price, and needs a €100 per year subscription to pay for the data costs.

PBO conclusion

These are a diverse range of products, from simple screamer alarms to sophisticated web-based monitoring systems. Which you choose is up to you and your wallet. The Watching Man gets our best-on-test award – despite its relatively

high cost, it was a fully-featured, intuitive and easy-to-install system. Yacht Sentinel was a well-thought-out, low-current system that worked effectively. BoatWarden is a very capable system that can control nearly anything on board. **PBO**