

# ESP 3000 system can send text messages and e-mail



Brendan Halper/Daily News

**ENGINEER** Ian McEachern with the ESP 3000 marine security device he invented and built.

## lock the boat

Entrepreneur's system could help stem tide of marine crime

By **JASON HEWLETT**  
Daily News Staff Reporter

Ian McEachern remembered the sick feeling he had in the pit of his stomach when he realized he had become a victim of a boat crime.

He was spending the night in Pender Harbour along the Sunshine Coast and had left his boat moored at a marina. On the morning he was set to leave, he found his boat had been ransacked.

"It was sitting sideways in the slip and the cover was off. The contents were strewn around the inside and all the panels were mangled."

The vandals had even tried to hot-wire the boat, prying open the ignition panel.

The cost of the damage was \$1,000.

That was two years ago. Since then, the Kamloops native has used his degree in electrical engineering to develop the ESP (extra-special protection) 3000: a 24-hour real-time two-way communications security device for boats.

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While most security devices for boats are adapted car alarms easily set off by wind or waves, the ESP 3000 is discreetly connected to a boat with multiple sensors that go off when there is movement on the deck or in any compartments.

"It wires into the battery and also has its own backup battery," McEachern said. "Once it goes off, it calls your home number, your work number, your cell number or a friend's number until it gets hold of someone."

The device can also send text messages and e-mails.

"There is a GPS system inside it too so it can be tracked."

The ESP 3000 costs \$1,000 plus installation. It is available online through McEachern's company, Silver Tip Marine Inc., at [www.silvertipmarine.com](http://www.silvertipmarine.com).

It's also available through Captain's Village Marina in Scotch Creek.

While the cost may seem a bit steep to some, McEachern maintains the money is worth it.

"When you buy a boat, you can buy an alarm. There is a significant problem with boat theft and theft from boats."

In the Okanagan, boat crime is increasingly becoming a problem with thefts beginning to occur in the Shuswap as well, he said.

Cheryl Bradstock, owner of Little River Boat World in Sorrento, agreed with McEachern.

She said there has been a no-



Daily News photo

**ACCORDING** to Cheryl Bradstock, owner of Little River Boat World in Sorrento, boat crime is starting to become an issue with tourists.

ticeable increase in boat crime on the Shuswap lakes.

"We're seeing more and more of it each year," she said. "It's starting to become an issue with tourists."

Last summer, she heard of more than 12 cases of boats being broken into or stolen. Some of her customers have even become victims themselves, with rental boats broken into and equipment stolen.

"One of our customers left the boat attached to a buoy. Some crooks rode up, slashed open the cover and stole a pair of (water) skis."

Most of the incidents occur in July and August, when traffic on the lakes is at its peak.

Bruce Gustafson, co-owner of Captains Village Marina, said equipment such as life jackets, wakeboards and even outboard motors have been stolen.

"Anything that is quick and easy to steal," he said. "People

leave things in the boat instead of taking them out every day. It's just like a trunk except you can't lock it."

Many of the thefts occur at night from private docks or buoys where lighting is poor. Thefts from marinas like his are rare.

"Any time it does happen, people come in by boat because our gate is locked at night."

Much of what has been taken are the quick-grab items. An actual boat theft has not occurred.

"Starting up a boat at 2 a.m. makes too much noise. People would notice that."

Gustafson's business partner, Dean Acton, said boats are also being stolen from dry land.

"People leave their boats on a trailer in their driveway and guys will back right in, hook them up to their truck and drive away."

Caroline Kramer, manager of Sea Dog Marina in Sicamous, employs a full-time security guard to watch the boats of her 150 clients.

"He lives right on the docks. We trade him moorage and he does security. It makes our customers happy."

The general consensus

among area police is that boat crime is not a widespread problem.

"It's not really a concern," said Kamloops RCMP Cpl. Mike Stewart. "We do get it, maybe a few a year, but it's not like cars."

It's more common to have items taken from boats than it is to have one stolen, he said.

"It's more prevalent because people beach them and then walk away, leaving them vulnerable. Often boats are taken out of storage and then the owners see that something is missing."

Salmon Arm RCMP Sgt. Eric Castle said boats make for an easy target for thieves.

"They're moored in marinas and on docks which are rarely patrolled by security. Boats aren't locked, they have covers that are snapped on so it's easy to get in them."

However, police in Salmon Arm are more likely to respond to calls of cars broken into at beaches and marinas, he said.

"It's hard to say if it's rising or not because we don't really keep track of it specifically. It does happen more in the summer, but not to crime wave proportions."

Stewart said boat crime is hard to keep track of because the thefts are pooled in with other crime statistics.

"They're pooled in with general theft over or under \$5,000. There are not statistics specifically for boat theft. It's not like auto crime."

Sicamous RCMP Sgt. Jim Harrison said boat crime is tough to keep track of because of how they are registered.

"The registration system is not computerized, it's an all paper system. If you want to check a registration number it's fairly difficult to do."

Boats often trade hands two to three times during their lifespan, with owners not bothering to change registration numbers.

"Quite often, people don't even bother post the numbers on their boats," he said.

Harrison is a boat owner himself and said the concept of a boat security system like McEachern's is a good one.

"I have a \$30,000 boat with an engine bigger than the one in my pickup. If you spend that much on one it would be worth looking at one."