

System hard on boat thieves

Wireless technology allows you to monitor your vessel, alerts you if it is entered or moved

BY GILLIAN SHAW
VANCOUVER SUN

It took a would-be boat thief to convince electrical engineer Ian McEachern to develop a wireless marine security system that would not only alert owners to break-ins, but also track the robbers down if they tried to take the boat away.

McEachern had docked his 20-foot bow rider power boat in Pender Harbour one night when the water was too rough to continue his journey. Checking into a local resort, he stepped onto the dock the next morning to find his boat askew at its moorings and the cover in disarray. It was only the robber's lack of technical expertise that saved the boat from being taken for a joyride or worse.

"They tried to hotwire it," said McEachern, who is at the Vancouver Boat Show to display his company's ESP 3000 Marine Security System. "They took a bunch of stuff, tools, key for my truck. That's when I decided I need some protection."

According to the RCMP boat thefts in Canada result in over \$60 million in losses annually. Opportunistic thieves will also jump into power boats at a dock and use them to transport drugs, a practice made easier by our proximity to the U.S. border.

The Victoria police marine unit have reported that as many as 12 boats a month are stolen on southern Vancouver Island, with the thieves using them to run marijuana to the U.S.

McEachern, who has worked in satellite communications, including a

Vancouver Boat Show

B.C. Place Stadium hours:

Today — 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Sunday — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

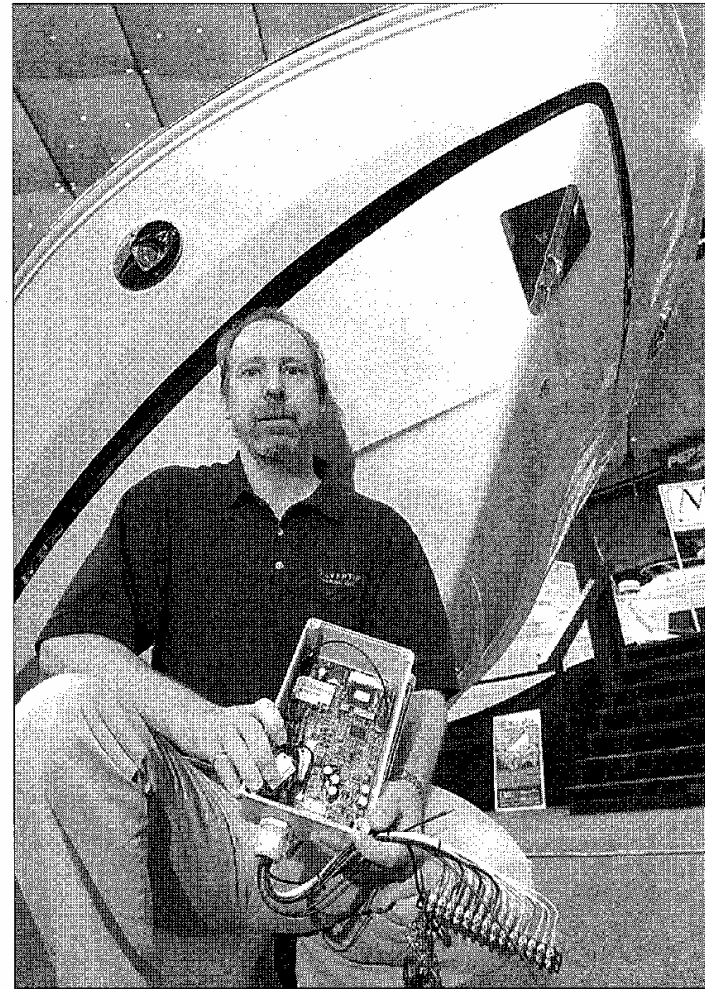
False Creek Yacht Club hours:

Today — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

stint as chief technology officer at Norsat International Inc., turned to wireless technology that would combine traditional anti-theft measures with GPS (Global Positioning System) to create a made-for-marine security solution. His start-up company, Silvertip Marine, introduced its first security system last year and over the summer started selling it to boat owners. The company has a lab and production facility in Delta.

The security system, which sells for \$2,000, has been marketed to individual boat owners as an after-market add on. Most recently, the company has signed on to provide it as a factory option on Svvara performance tow boats. The system is also available as an option on Monaro power boats.

The Marine ESP 3000 can monitor everything from someone's stepping on the deck of a boat, to temperature, its bilge, all windows and doors, to smoke and gaseous fumes. At the first sign that anything is amiss, it sends a wireless signal to the owner. Notification is by phone, text message or e-



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN

Ian McEachern is president and CEO of Silvertip Marine.

mail and if the system doesn't get someone on the first number, it will go through backup numbers to sound the warning.

An owner can check the status of the boat in real time, checking to see which sensors have been triggered. An owner can also configure the system remotely, turning it on and off.

McEachern said many thefts of small trailer-towed boats come when the boat isn't even in the water.

"People are driving by, they see no one is around and they just hook on and go," he said.

If the boat is moved, the security system will alert the owner to its location via GPS.