

BILGE PUMP RECOMMENDATIONS

By Don Street

All too many yachts are going to sea and doing RORC and other off shore races and transatlantic rallies with inadequate bilge pumping systems. After checking roughly 90 boats bilge pumping system at the Southampton and Annapolis shows I ascertained the on the vast majority of boats bilge pumping systems were grossly inadequate.

The standard installation is two 10 GPM diaphragm pumps, one on deck, one below decks. The one on deck is usually located such that it is almost impossible to open it up to clear a clogged intake or discharge valve. This type of installation is inadequate as is illustrated by the below stories.

Outer Limits hit something 330 miles east of Bermuda June 2012 YW. The crew felt they could not cope with the ingress of water and jumped off on a passing freighter. However with no one pumping the transponder continued to transmit for 48 hours!!!!

In contrast, in 1995, the 90 year old 46' engineless yawl Iolaire popped a stem bolt (the only part of the boat we did not work on during her 94/95 rebuild) and started leaking like a sieve. Using just ONE of our TWO Edson single acting 30 GPM diaphragm pumps, pumping ten minutes out of every thirty minutes, we were pumping between 500 and 600 GPH. We continued to do this for 48 hours until we reach Horta.

I have checked ever rule that exists concerning safety of yachts to ascertain requirements regarding size and pumping capacity of manually operated bilge pumps. The only rule that specifies size/pumping capacity of manual pumps in relation to the size of the boat is German Llyods. German Llyods specifies as follows:

LOA in meters	pump size in GPM
8	13
20	21
15	25

If Inspection committees for every offshore race, and ocean crossing Rally remember ISAF rule 2.03.1(e) that states equipment must be in relation to the size of the boat, and reflects on the above figures, and they use common sense in enforcing ISAF rule 2.03.1(e) no new rules are needed. But, an awful lot of boats when inspected will be required to upgrade their bilge pumping system.

DM Street, Jr. - RORC member since 1955