

Snapless Boat Cover

To keep the elements and critters out of your boat during storage, a boat cover has to fit snugly. To make that job a little easier, a Wisconsin-based company has developed a boat cover with a neat “ratchet fastening system” that promises to do a much better job of keeping the cover tight — without snaps.

Dowco’s Guardian cover features a stainless ratchet fastening system that has a thin rope sewn into the perimeter of the cover that works like a drawstring. Once you place the cover over the boat, excess rope is pulled through until snug. A few pulls on the ratchet finishes the job.



Originally developed for deep-V and modified-V trailerable fishing boats, the Guardian ratchet cover is now available for runabouts, center consoles and pontoon boats up to about 24 feet.

Covers start at about \$300. Call 800-558-7755 to order or find a dealer near you.

BOAT BITS

20 minutes

The average time it takes to get a complimentary

Vessel Safety Check given by a U.S Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadrons volunteer.

Source: USCGA & USPS

Sailors Need Their Space

When you’re on the hook and have a few guests aboard, a sailboat’s cockpit can get crowded pretty quickly. To open up space, some sailors remove the wheel, or their boat may have a “folding” steering wheel.



But folding wheels are pricey, and if you don’t like the idea of removing the wheel entirely, or perhaps are concerned about not being able to steer at a moment’s notice, the “Tiller Wheel” could be the answer.

For less than half the cost of a folding wheel, the Tiller Wheel functions like a tiller on a small sailboat, but in the vertical position. The device is essentially a stainless shaft that slips onto your boat’s steering wheel shaft and is secured with a thumb-screw. Three keyway slots allow vertical to near-vertical mounting, no matter where your wheel’s shaft key is located.

The Tiller Wheel starts at \$149. Go to wayneproducts.com for more information.

Light the Decks

Boating after dark? Unfortunately, most boats do not come with deck floodlights, leaving the owner to choose among several aftermarket options.

Halogen lights are still today’s standard-bearer, as they balance price and performance, but they also draw the greatest amount of battery power. Xenon deck lights offer greatly improved brightness, but at a significant cost. A third option may be a new decklight from Hella, their “Mega-beam” LED deck floodlight, the first marine-grade LED deck light on the market, according to the company.

On the bright scale, it may not match the halogen or super-bright Xenon deck lights but the LED unit excels at reliability and energy efficiency — perfect for low-draw applications. Four single LEDs clustered together do all the work and draw just 1.7 amps. Hella also says that the light’s output is similar to a 28-watt halogen bulb, and seems brighter because of its white color spectrum.

The deck light is “watertight” and unlike other lights, has a sealed gland around the power cable to keep moisture out. Hardware is beefy 316 stainless.

The Mega-beam retail price is about \$190; go to hellamarine.com for more information.

Winterizing for Fuels

ValvTect, the company known for its specially formulated marine engine fuels, is offering a \$5 rebate when you purchase any two ValvTect products, including their Marine Fuel Stabilizer and Premium Fogging Oil.

ValvTect says its stabilizer is unique in that it is formulated for two-stroke and four-stroke marine engines and contains additives to help combat the negative effects of ethanol-blended gasoline. It can also be used with diesel engines.

The rebate is good until December 31. Look for the rebate coupon attached to the product’s container.

Play It Again

Ever wish you could play back the last transmission you heard on your VHF radio?

Cobra Electronics’ MR HH425LI VP claims to be the first handheld VHF radio with a digital voice recorder that automatically records the last 20 seconds of transmission. This “Rewind-Say-Again” feature lets you replay calls as well as record messages for later playback. The radio also offers “VibrAlert” for silent alerts and encryption for privacy as well.

With the push of a button, the radio can also transition from marine VHF frequencies to one of 15 GMRS channels.

The handheld goes for around \$170 and there is a fixed-mount unit offering similar features retailing for about \$190. Go to cobra.com for more information. ■