

Boaters: Beware of Land Sharks

Keep your boat safe when it's ashore. Boat theft often occurs in the off-season. Once they're stolen, most boats are not recovered. If you are a boat owner, learn some easy and effective ways to protect your craft from theft.

>>Five tips for storing boats safely

Boat Theft Often Occurs in the Off-Season

If you're about to store your boat for the off-season, be sure it's in a secure location. Many theft cases happen when the boat is ashore.

"There are an unbelievable number of cases in which the storage facility says they never received the boat and the insured says that they left the boat in front of the building," says Gene Robertson, supervisor in ERIE's Corporate Security. "Many boat owners don't discover that the boat is missing until they attempt to retrieve it at the start of the new season."

Marine theft is a problem nationwide. From January to May, nearly 2,000 boats were stolen, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB). In 2010, there were more than 6,660 boat theft cases. Less than half of those stolen were recovered.

Navigating Safety and Security

Whenever you're storing your boat, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) recommends obtaining a contract from the storage facility that includes an employee's signature. Other proactive steps to follow:

1. **Mark it:** Mark your boat and equipment with the vessel's Hull Identification Number (HIN). A 12-character serial number helps law enforcement agencies to recover stolen boats and equipment quickly. All motorboats, with very few exceptions, must display the registration number on the forward part of the boat.
2. **Keep records:** Place registration and title papers in a safe location other than your boat.
3. **Take video or photographs:** Take photos or videotape your boat, equipment and HIN.
4. **Secure the ship:** Disable the boat and remove expensive equipment when not in use. When parking a boat on its trailer, use a trailer hitch lock.
5. **Buy insurance:** Talk to your insurance agent about purchasing coverage for your boat and personal needs.

You should also be cautious when buying a boat. Carefully review the vessel and its ownership paperwork. To avoid problems, be sure to match the HIN listed on the title and registration to the one attached to the boat.

For more information about NICB or other fraud prevention tips, visit www.nicb.org. The site includes a printable [Marine Identification Checklist](#) and a [Boat Theft Brochure](#). 

Call us at 585-394-2790 to learn more about boat insurance coverage. Erie Insurance's coverage helps protect your boat, boating equipment and accessories. It also protects you with liability and medical payments coverage.

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