

Stop thief!

Lots of companies offer security products which aim to prevent your trailboat or outboard engine being stolen, but not all are as tough as they seem. We invited along some police experts to attack-test 15 of the best, to see which are the most secure. **REPORT BY PHILIP POND**

Lock it or lose it! That's fast becoming a sad fact of life if you own an outboard motor or keep a boat on a trailer, as marine-related crime continues to rise.

There are plenty of security devices available which aim to immobilise portable motors and hitchable trailers, but how effective are they? And which models are best?

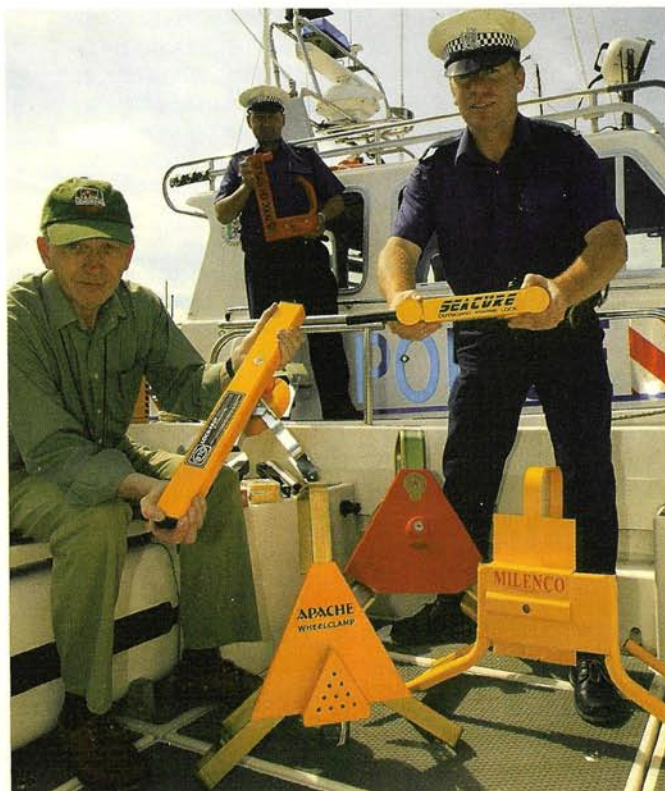
We joined forces with the police to give them the toughest test possible. Basically, we tried to break them.

THE HEAVY BRIGADE

We asked 11 different suppliers to let us test their products, and our test batch comprised a total of 15 products.

Six were wheelclamps, all suitable for boat trailers. The other nine were outboard motor locks, some designed for use on big motors with through-transom bolt mountings and others aimed at small engines fitted with hand clamps.

Apart from the criminals themselves, the greatest experts on the techniques and tools of the thieving trade are the police. So we invited two police officers from the Marine Unit of the



Hampshire Constabulary to help us test the products on offer.

In a gamekeeper-turned-poacher exercise, we asked them to do their worst with each security device in turn, trying to break or remove it so as to 'nick'

the motor or trailer it was primed to protect.

In an impressive display of aggressive intent, they brought along a crowbar, a selection of hacksaws, a cordless drill, bolt-croppers, a lump hammer, cold

chisels and various screwdrivers. We gave them 10-15 minutes for each model, although it is a reasonable assumption that any self-respecting tea-leaf would give up after around five minutes without success, especially if working in a fairly public place.

NO BOTHER?

Besides resistance to attack, we also assessed each security device for ease of use. This includes how simple it is to fit and for you (as opposed to a thief!) to remove, and, in the case of wheel locks, how convenient it is to transport.

In this respect, there is a crucial difference between the two types of security device featured here. Outboard locks are fit-and-forget devices; once installed, they stay put until a motor needs to be removed from the transom.

In contrast, wheelclamps will need to be removed every time you want to tow your boat somewhere, and carried in the boot of your car for use away from home.

If the device is difficult to fit, you might be inclined not to bother, in which case it won't serve its purpose.



Above Hampshire police brought along an impressive display of tools to bend, break, cut and saw their way through the various security products

Outboard locks

Compass Master Lock

£14

Type clamp fitting.
Lock padlock.

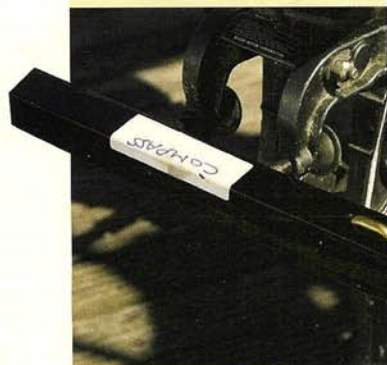
Size 29 x 5 x 4cm.

Weight 650g.

Although by far the least expensive of all of the models that were tested out, this has a vinyl-coated tube of case-hardened steel construction, a brass padlock with two keys and 1000 combinations, and a lifetime guarantee. Durability and corrosion resistance also look very promising. The padlock fitting is designed in such a way as to prevent access by bolt-croppers, and the steel tube proved surprising resilient to attack. But one weak spot is the padlock; a hacksaw was utilised which ripped through it in no time at all. In addition, the other end of the tube is open, allowing easy access for a criminal with a cold chisel.

Enquiries

Compass Watersports.
Tel: 01380 813100.
www.compass24.com



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓

Fulton Motor Lok

£23



Type clamp fitting.
Lock integral.

Size 30 x 4 x 4cm.

Weight 1050g.

This looks like a larger version of the Compass, but there are significant differences. One is an integral, press-button lock (supplied with two keys and a cover to keep out rain and spray), which makes bolt-croppers ineffective. Another is the two-piece casing, with closed ends, so there is no danger of a thief getting access to the interior with a cold chisel. Thirdly, there is a foam filler to reduce noise and vibration. Our police officers judged this relatively effective as a low-cost security device. However, the construction does not appear very robust, and corrosion could cause problems over time. Editor Hugo Andreae says his lock seized and the case started to rust within two seasons.

Enquiries

Mailspeed Marine.
Tel: 0870 9909951.
www.mailspeedmarine.com

MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓

OML Slot Lock

£55

Type clamp fitting.
Lock integral.

Size 26 x 4 x 4cm.

Weight 1025g.

This device has noticeable similarities to its sister model the Bolt lock, but also marked differences. You get the same detachable, key-lockable nose cap and pair of keys, and once again a million combinations, but no end cap. The tube is of the same robust stainless steel construction, but nearly four times longer. This model is designed for small, clamp-fitting outboards, so there is a slot, virtually the length of the tube, to accommodate them. This lock proved impervious to bolt-croppers, drill and hacksaw, but the base is open, which our test team found made it particularly vulnerable to attack with a hammer and cold chisel, or even a screwdriver.

Enquiries

Outboard Motor Loc.
Tel: 01326 318101.
www.freewinds.co.uk



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓

Seacure Clamp Lock

£40



Type clamp fitting.
Lock integral.

Size 28 x 6 x 4cm.

Weight 1050g.

This lock represents a very different approach to security from its sister model (see opposite page). Much smaller and less conspicuous, it comes in two box sections which lock together. Its shiny stainless steel construction means its resistance to corrosion should be high. Our policemen were pleased to see that the closed ends prevented access to the interior with a chisel. The projecting barrel lock looked as if it might be a weak point, but it proved invulnerable. Only smashing the device (and the engine clamps with it) with a sledge hammer might have removed it.

Enquiries

Seacure Locks.
Tel: 01202 697469.



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Trem Lock

£29

Type clamp fitting.

Lock padlock.

Size 32 x 4 x 4cm.

Weight 535g.

Engine locks don't come much simpler than this. It comprises a stainless steel tube, open at one end and featuring a plastic cap at the other, with a long slot through which to fit a pair of outboard clamps.

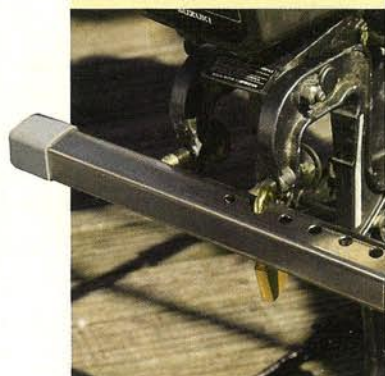
You secure it to the motor by means of a brass padlock and a long staple, and you get three keys. Sadly, this is an open invitation for a thief. Its length allows plenty of space to get access with bolt-croppers, and ours sliced through the staple like a hot knife through butter. Furthermore, the steel tube's open end made levering it open an easy operation, and there's also ample opportunity to use a chisel on the engine clamps via that long, wide slot.

Enquiries

Mailspeed Marine.

Tel: 0870 9909951.

www.mailspeedmarine.com



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓

OML Bolt Lock

£45



Type through-transom bolt (over 15hp).

Lock integral.

Size 8 x 4 x 4cm (excluding threaded shaft).

Weight 435g.

This device is short, simple and to the point. It looks like a scaled-down shell cartridge: a smooth, shiny stainless steel tube with a small opening for the through-transom engine mount in one end and a keyhole in the other. The tapered section which forms the nose comes off when you turn the key. The tube itself, 3-4mm thick, is solid, durable and very corrosion-resistant. Our two would-be thieves failed to break, bend, split or cut through it.

Enquiries Outboard Motor Loc.

Tel: 01326 318101.

www.freewinds.co.uk



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Hillock Motorlock

£82 & £88

Type through-transom bolt (40-200hp, and up to 40hp).

Lock integral.

Size 6.5 x 4.5 x 4.5cm (excluding threaded shaft).

Weight 420g.

These are both basically a giant bolt with a head as big as a tap handle. They fit through the transom and are locked in place or released using one of the two keys supplied. The threaded shaft which passes through the transom cannot be removed without prior use of the key first. As well as seemingly corrosion-proof, the whole thing is nothing if not sturdy and substantial, and our two would-be villains were unable to break, remove or do any significant damage to it. The slightly pricier model has additional spacers to ensure the correct fit for a variety of motors, and the threaded shaft is noticeably shorter.

Enquiries

Aqua-Marine Mfg (UK).

Tel: 023 8069 4949.

www.aqua-marine.co.uk



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Seacure Bolt Lock

£119



Type through-transom bolt (over 40hp).

Lock integral.

Size 41 x 7 x 8cm

(excluding threaded shaft).

Weight 2950g.

This is the only model in our test group which is capable of securing two outboard motors at once. It is also the most expensive and the most conspicuous, which gives it value as a deterrent. Its construction of stainless steel with a nylon coating, plus a captive cap over the keyhole make it very solid and should protect it from corrosion. Two keys are provided. The police were impressed by the lock's high visibility, and by the fact that it proved impervious to attack, by whatever means they tried.

Enquiries Seacure Locks.

Tel: 01202 697469.



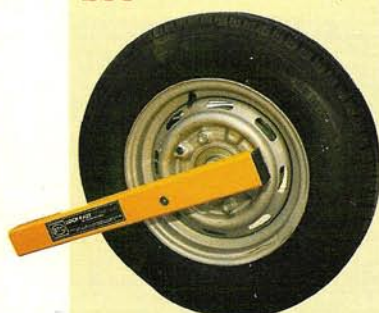
MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Wheelclamps

Breckland Lockfast

£60



Packed size 58 x 6 x 9cm.

Weight 3.5kg.

Fitting time 9sec.

This was the lightest and most compact wheel lock we looked at, and one of the least expensive. It comes ready to use, with no assembly required, although (as a once-only operation) two of the trailer's existing wheel studs have to be replaced with the substitutes provided. Once this is done, it is quick and simple to fit. The press-button locking system is drill resistant. There are no other loose parts to lose, and the device is very convenient to transport. Its epoxy-coated finish suggests that durability and corrosion-resistance should be good. Most importantly of all, our policemen found it vandal-proof, with no weak points.

Enquiries Breckland Trading Co.
www.brecklandtrading.co.uk
Tel: 01493 751620.



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Bulldog Titan

£95

Packed size 48 x 35 x 14cm.

Weight 16.5kg.

Fitting time 197sec.

Besides being the joint most-expensive model in our test, this aptly named device is far and away the heaviest and bulkiest. Initial assembly is easier than first impressions suggest, as the bits fit together quite logically. However, fitting, using the spanner and keys provided, is rather long-winded, and its sheer bulk is likely to be a disincentive to use it regularly. The lock has a million combinations, and once in place there is no mistaking that this unit is on guard, as it's nothing if not conspicuous. It looks durable too, and we reckon it will outlast any boat trailer. Ultimately, however, our police officers were not impressed; using a crowbar, they were able to lever the clamp's centre plate far enough away to undo the wheel nuts. A simple locking wheelnut would plug this chink in your defences.

Enquiries

Bulldog Security Products.
Tel: 01952 728105.
www.bulldogsecure.com



MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓

Keep-It Premier

£95

Packed size 58 x 27 x 21cm.

Weight 12kg.

Fitting time 72sec

Big and bulky, this device is conspicuous enough to have deterrent value. It is the joint most-expensive clamp in our test. Initial assembly is quick and simple; you use an Allen key to set up the required width, which is a once-only operation. Fitting is also easier than expected, although we suspect this model's size and weight would be disincentives to carrying it everywhere with you in the car. The drill-resistant lock is one of five million combinations, and you get two keys. Heavy-duty construction includes carbon-steel retaining arms, which should make it highly corrosion resistant. However, our would-be thieves managed to bypass this by levering out the centre plate, which allowed them access to the wheel nuts. To counteract this, you would need to replacing one of these with a locking nut.

Enquiries George Dyke Ltd.
www.keep-it.co.uk
Tel: 0870 4442820.

MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓

Milenco M1

£72

Packed size 55 x 26 x 24cm.

Weight 9.5kg.

Fitting time 50sec.

In many ways this device appears to be a happy compromise. It's relatively large and conspicuous, but lighter in weight than most other models. You get three rather than two keys for the nine million-combination, drill-resistant lock. Initial setting up is quick and easy, although the unit does not fold down very small when in transit, and fitting it on to our test trailer proved surprisingly fast. Given that a disc covers the wheel nuts, making them completely inaccessible, our expectations were high. Unfortunately, they were not realised. Using a 2ft-long crowbar, our police officers managed to bend one of the retaining bars just enough to enable them to lever the complete clamp off the wheel, in a matter of minutes. A lack of width adjustment, resulting in a less-than-cosy fit, didn't help.

Enquiries Milenco.
Tel: 01908 220102.

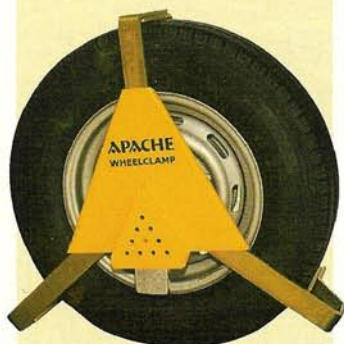


MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓

Pyramid Apache

£50



Packed size 35 x 35 x 6cm.

Weight 10.5kg.

Fitting time 186sec.

Open the box, and this device looks like a Meccano set. Grapple with all the assorted parts, and it seems like a jigsaw puzzle.

When you finally work out how to fit it all together, it becomes obvious that this unit is no lightweight; its separate padlock is huge, and comes with four keys and has several million combinations, and its long-term durability and resistance to corrosion appear good.

But there are too many bits to lose or leave behind, and it takes too long to fit to a wheel. Moreover, our police officers quickly discovered its Achilles heel.

There was room to use a socket set, never mind an open-ended spanner, on the wheel nuts, which were easily accessible.

Enquiries Pyramid Products.
Tel: 01623 421277.

SAS HD 2000

£65

Packed size 41 x 28 x 7cm.

Weight 4.6kg.

Fitting time 37sec.

As one of the simplest, lightest and most compact wheelclamps on test, this is among the easiest to transport. Initial assembly takes no time at all, because it comes ready to use; you just have to replace two of the trailer's existing wheelnuts with substitutes provided for the purpose, which is a once-only exercise. Afterwards, fitting the unit is quick and simple. Two keys come as standard, and the drill-resistant, press-button lock has 15,000 combinations. Construction appears durable, resistance to corrosion should be relatively high, and there are no loose parts to lose or leave behind. Under attack, the clamp responded with vigour, and our test team couldn't disable it in the time available.

Enquiries

SAS Security Products.

Tel: 08700 727234.

www.sasproducts.co.uk



Verdict

Any security device is better than none at all. Using one could give you a discount on your insurance premium, and even the flimsiest lock might dissuade the opportunist. At the other end of the scale, a really determined tea-leaf armed with an angle-grinder will get round just about any security device.



However, the more difficult and time-consuming you make life for him, and the more noise he has to make in the process, the less likely he is to hang around.

With this in the forefront of our minds, we would recommend the Seacure Clamp Lock for a clamp-fitting motor, the Seacure Bolt Lock for a twin-engined through-transom installation, the OML Bolt Lock for a single-engined through-transom mounting,

and the Breckland Lockfast in the wheelclamp category.

An obvious general conclusion is that you get what you pay for, so if you are serious about security, you must be prepared to invest in it. It simply doesn't make sense to scrimp on the cost of something meant to protect equipment costing hundreds or thousands of pounds.

thanks

Our thanks go to PC Jeff Jarvis and PC Bob Chambers of the Marine Unit of Hampshire Constabulary for their help, guidance and perseverance while we were researching this feature. We are also grateful to trailer specialists Indespension, and to Jason at their Southampton branch, for the loan of a Super Roller Coaster trailer which we could use for testing the wheelclamps. www.indespension.co.uk

MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓

MBM ratings

EASE OF USE	✓✓✓✓✓
SECURITY	✓✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓