

AS SEEN IN



All Eyes on Deck

INTERNET-BASED MONITORING SYSTEM OFFERS PEACE OF MIND

BY JEFF McLAREN

"CIVILIZATION ADVANCES BY EXTENDING THE NUMBER of important operations which we can perform without thinking of them." — Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)



Photo courtesy of Rob van Spronsen

KEEP AN EYE ON IT — Your boat is your baby, and EyeOnBoard is a new system that will help you to watch over it even when you can't be there in person.

The famed philosopher and mathematician probably had nobler causes on his mind when he said this, but hey — we can't be in all places all the time so here's to advancing civilization one boat at a time.

Conrad Weiderhold had a dilemma. He lived in the Bay Area, and his boat, a shiny new West Bay SonShip, sat alone in Roche Harbor, Washington, the picturesque destination marina on San Juan Island. The former Intel executive liked boating in the Pacific Northwest but his everyday life and affairs took place

some 1,500 miles away.

As a recent retiree, Weiderhold was — and is — at the forefront of computer technology. So as he stared at a computer on his desk at home and worried about his love and investment left unattended far to the north, he decided to take action — and EyeOnBoard, an Internet-based remote yacht monitoring system, was founded.

EYE ON THE PRIZE

The fact is, Conrad Weiderhold's idea was not a new one; millions of

homes around the country have an electronic security system that is monitored by high-tech security companies 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

But, as we all know, boats are different. Boats move, they rock and they are not permanently fastened to any one location. Furthermore, there was rarely constant communication to most dockside yachts, nevermind those under way.

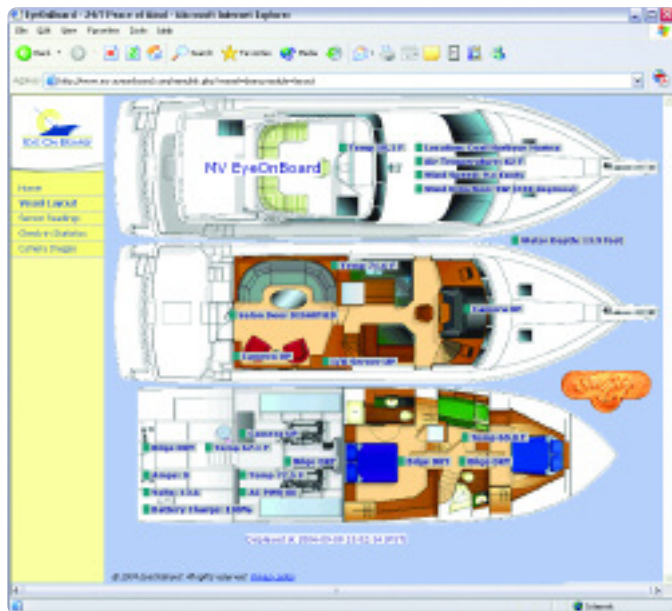
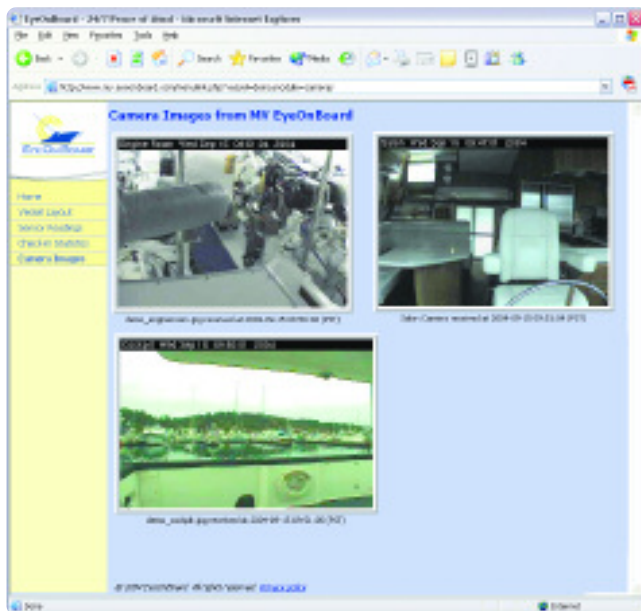
With the overnight proliferation of wireless Internet access available at marinas, and the introduction of cellular and satellite capabilities, Weiderhold's monitoring system only became possible at the exact time he needed it. Maybe he was simply in the right place at the right time — or maybe Weiderhold was the right man to make it happen. Regardless, EyeOnBoard solves a lot of the security and monitoring problems that face absentee owners.

WATCH YOUR WARES

The system consists of a PC-based server that records information from a plethora of available sensors and cameras installed on board the boat. The server then transmits the readings to a wireless router that sends the information to your homepage on EyeOnBoard's Web site through a wireless Internet provider on shore.

The server also may accept information from an onboard navigation computer feeding it GPS and instrument data.

If you have a system with all the cameras and sensors available you can log on to their Web site from anywhere in the world to see your boat and check



WIRELESS WONDER — Check on your boat via the Internet, no matter where you are in the world. With wireless technology vastly improving at many of the marinas you may visit, EyeOnBoard can monitor as many onboard systems as you want and can check in with you as frequently as you like.

its vitals.

Even better, the boat will e-mail or call you if there is a problem. The sensors can be set to certain parameters so that if, for example, the bilges fill with water or a door opens, you get a call. EyeOnBoard also has contracted with a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week Yacht Response Center to take action for you.

But EyeOnBoard doesn't tackle only catastrophic events. With air temp and wind sensors installed, the system becomes a real-time weather station transmitting right from your boat to your desk. You can use outdoor cameras to see the weather and sensor readings to give you accurate temperature and wind statistics. Looking out your window, even from afar, blows away the weatherman any day.

If you send your boat off with a crew or let friends use it for the weekend you can track their progress by GPS or see if they are wasting your precious fuel by running above cruising speed.

When you're on the boat, EyeOnBoard becomes a central computer for monitoring the engine room, electrical issues, weather and all the other information that should be at hand while under way.

BEING NOTIFIED

What I found to be daunting yet absolutely mandatory was the levels

to which the owner can specify the exact parameters for setting off an alarm. There are hundreds of settings that determine when or if an alarm will alert you or the Yacht Response Center (or both).

You can set the system to call your cell phone, your home phone or the marina manager's office. Or you can have it send an e-mail to any address. There really is no limit to the amount of commotion you could stir up when your bilge pump goes off.

The technology is good and the equipment is relatively standard hardware, so EyeOnBoard should be reliable and durable.

There are a few issues I see with the system that may or may not be addressed easily.

First, installing the system aftermarket — after the boat's been built — could be a major job. Wires from the various sensors must run from the bilges, windows, doors and pilot-house or flybridge to one central computer. This may not be a problem from some locations, like the bilge, but accessing a wire run to a forward hatch may be impossible. Installing cameras under an aft deck overhang after a boat is all put together can be very difficult.

Also, finding a safe and accessible storage locker for all the components that make up the system may be a


chore. Of course, absolutely anything can be done by throwing enough money at it, but these are things to consider.

If you specify EyeOnBoard to your builder while your boat is being built, installation is a no-brainer and will work in with the myriad other systems that will go in during the building process.

The other issue to consider is cost. What price would you pay for security and peace of mind? It's a completely personal and situational issue. EyeOnBoard runs about \$9,000 for a well-outfitted package, plus a monthly fee of \$99 to \$139 depending on the level of Vessel Response service.

For Conrad Weiderhold and countless other "destination" boaters these things are just incidental to having hands-on control of their prized possession while hundreds or thousands of miles away. With EyeOnBoard you can be in two places at once. 🍷

CONTACT: EYEONBOARD; (916) 933-3602 OR (604) 512-0077 IN CANADA. WWW.EYEONBOARD.COM



JEFF McLAREN holds a 100-ton U.S. Coast Guard Master's license and has been a marine electronics dealer in Newport Beach, California for the past 10 years.