WATERPROOF HATCH UPDATE FOR THE SEAWIND

One Way to Do It…(UPDATED: FEB. '04)

By Andy Rust
Seawind #149
Air Capitol Model Sailing Club

The purpose of this article is to address the issue of the waterproof hatch on the Seawind—or should I say the PROBLEM, and to offer one *possible* solution. The ideas presented in this article are not entirely my own, and I thank all of those Seawind owners who have posted their ideas on the subject via the Seawind Resource Center.

The Problem

One of the only serious complaints that I have ever had with the boat we all sail, is the design of the waterproof hatch that the manufacturer supplies. Not only is the hatch material not rigid enough, but the sealing material provided with the kit is much too porous, which lets water in. This is a serious problem when trying to keep the sensitive electronics inside dry and functioning properly. After just a few minutes of sailing in moderate chop, I would have up to ½ inch of water inside my hull!

Solution # 1: Replace the hatch cover with a more rigid material.

This material can be anything from wood, to acrylic to aluminum… virtually any fairly hard substance that can be cut in the shape of a hatch, and is waterproof. Some people have modified the stock hatch by adding reinforcements on the underside, preventing flex. This is fine too—the point is to have a stiff, waterproof material.

Once you have selected you hatch material, you can use the kit hatch as a template, and cut out a matching one in the new material. I did not use the kit hatch as an exact template (mine is a little larger than the kit hatch) due to where I put my mounting screws

Solution #2: Replace the sealing gasket material with Neoprene or weathers tripping material.

As mentioned earlier, the material provided in the kit is much too porous, and tends to get waterlogged, and eventually leaks like a faucet. The first thing that I did was find a material that was less porous—that didn't soak up the water, but rather repelled it. There is more than one option for this situation, but what I chose was a product from M-D Building Products, called "P-Profile Extreme Temperature Weather Strip" for doors and windows. It's 7/32" thick and 3/8" wide, and available through many home improvement stores. It's important that no matter what material you use, that it be CLOSED CELL material, so that it doesn't soak up moisture, but repels it.

Once you have your weather stripping material, you need to attach it. I chose to attach it to the lip of the hatch opening itself (the material is self-adhesive), rather than the hatch lid. Simply cut off the amount of weather strip that you need off of the roll, peel off the adhesive strip cover, and begin sticking it to the raised hatch lip. There will obviously be a seam where the two ends meet, and as long as you take care to make as tight a seam as

possible, this isn't a problem. My seam was in the middle of the aft side of the hatch. (see photo of Bill's McWilliams' hatch)

Solution #3 – Attaching and mounting your new hatch.
This is where one's own personal preference can play a role for sure. Some people have drilled holes in the LIP of the hatch area (one on bow end, one for each side, and one in the back (stern) side). However, the lip isn't very wide, so if you plan to go this route, make sure to use a smaller screw (like 4mm) . I couldn't find screws that size, so I decided to drill my holes in the deck just a little on the outside of the lip, and I used 8 X 32 X 3/4" machine screws, nuts and wing nuts from ACE Hardware

It's easiest if you lay your hatch over the opening in it's proper position and drill the hatch AND deck holes simultaneously, rather than trying to match the lid holes to the deck holes later. After I drilled my holes in the deck/hatch, I inserted the screws from the bottom (heads pointed down) and secured them in place with the nuts on the top deck side. REMEMBER TO BUY STAINLESS STEEL HARDWARE to assure rust resistance, and don't over-tighten the nuts, to avoid cracking the deck material around the screws. Then you lay the hatch over the top, and secure with stainless steel wing nuts for easy removal (without having to use a wrench).

This hatch design is MUCH more effective in keeping out water—I noticed an IMMEDIATE difference… only couple of drops in the hull after an hour of sailing. The hatch is almost as easy to remove as the kit hatch, but to me the benefits far outweigh some minor inconvenience.

I have included some pictures of Bill McWilliams' Seawind (USAOK-005) that has this design. Thanks Bill, for the use of the pictures, and thanks to everyone who uses the Seawind Resource Center Forum for your ideas and input. Feel free to email me if you have any additional questions.


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Andy Rust
Seawind #149
www.acmsc.org
nacra521499@yahoo.com