

"Stay Afloat worked perfectly creating absolute seals..."

Chris Beeson - Assistant Editor, Yachting Monthly

Stay Afloat

This by-product of petroleum production is described as a 'mouldable polymer'. When cold, it's similar to tepid wax in texture and, once out of the pot, can be worked fairly easily in the hand. I used this in the previous Crash Test to seal the 2mm (1/16in) holes we had drilled in the hull to fix a sheet of thin plywood over a big hole – and it worked perfectly. That said, a screw hole and a 40mm (1 1/2in) seacock tailpipe are very different beasts.

After a couple of seconds spent scooping out enough of the gunge to stuff into the hole, I smeared the brown ball over the tail pipe and the flow stopped immediately. The advantage of this material over a soft wood bung is that it's amorphous, so it doesn't matter how distorted the tail

pipe is, nor do you need to force it into the pipe, which could damage it further.

Its main drawback, based on the knowledge that the majority of broken seacocks snap off

flush at the hull, is that it won't fair as well as a bung in that situation.

There wasn't much water pressure at the heads outlet, but we'd already destroyed the log pipe so I sought out a similar challenge for the gunk. We removed the hose from the 40mm

(1 1/2in) galley sink drain outlet, at the lowest point in the boat and an impressive geyser shot up. This time, I simply upended the pot on the tailpipe, twisted the pot and then lifted it off. Again, the ingress of water stopped completely.

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ABOVE: We removed the galley sink drain pipe and opened the seacock to create a gusher

ABOVE RIGHT: Faced with a serious leak, I stuck the pot over it, twisted and it sealed perfectly

RIGHT: Stay Afloat also sealed the cracked tailpipe, adapting to its irregular shape with ease



How we set up the test



For our first test, we knocked out the log impeller with a hammer, breaking the fitting



Next we smashed the fitting away at hull level, leaving a hole that gushed impressively



The cracked toilet outlet tailpipe left an irregular hole to block



Access to seacocks can be bad so expect to work one-handed

Unless you are operating a seacock when it breaks, the first you will know about its failure is when you see the sole boards awash. This was not a scenario we wanted to recreate because if the seacocks or transducer fittings were submerged it would be impossible to evaluate the success of each repair method. As with last month's hole-in-the-hull test, the Crash Test Boat was floating in MDL's travel hoist, at Hamble Point Marina, while we created and repaired holes. When the water rose above the fitting, we stopped testing so the hoist operator could lift the hull and drain it through two 2in holes drilled in the bilge.

For filming and photography we chose seacocks with good access. We chose the toilet outlet and log transducer in the forward heads, where both doors and a pillar between them had been removed. Starting with the log, we broke

the fitting with a hammer, tried various methods of stemming the flow, then broke the internal securing nut to remove the fitting completely. We broke the nut, but the mastic used to secure it stopped us removing the fitting entirely. Using a hammer, we reduced it to hull level then tried various ways of stemming the flood.

For the second test, Paul removed the hose from the toilet outlet. Though the seacock looked OK, the badly dezincified tail pipe split. A second problem was that the Crash Test Boat has lost weight recently, so the outlet was above the waterline. To ensure we got some flow, we removed the bungs in the two drain holes and flooded the boat to an inch over the sole boards, then asked the travel hoist operator to raise the stern and roll her slightly to port to get the outlet under the water. Once we had flow, we started the test.