

## BILGE PUMP INDICATOR LIGHT

Rick Lucas: *Ping*

Ping has two automatic electric bilge pumps connected through Rule switch/light/fuse panels mounted on the engine room wall at the base of the companionway ladder. She also has a pressure water system. They all generally work fine, but I had no way of knowing if any of the activated while we were underway. Wanting to know if the bilge pumps kick on is obvious. Knowing the pressure system is continuously running will keep your fresh water tanks from going dry. Someone suggested that I mount indicator lights to monitor their activity in the open space available on the engine instrument cluster which I did after a trip to Radio Shack for some big lights.



Installation was a snap. I drilled three holes just above the rev counter and slid two red, for the bilge pumps, and a blue, into place after putting some LifeSeal on the collar of each light. I then ran the wires along the inside of the engine room wall to the back of the bilge pump switches, connecting them to the same terminals used by the original light. That was it. I ran the blue light leads to the switch on the pressure water pump. I think the whole job took about 1 hour.

These little lights have come in handy twice in the few months since the installation. The first time a red light informed me of a leaking problem with the fresh water system that allowed water in the tanks, when full, to pour out of the overflow tubes and into the bilge. After sailing hard to windward, we tacked and on came the light. The investigation of this problem led me to undertake the fresh water system project described elsewhere in the project file.

More recently, after pounding through a large motorboat wake under power the red light for the primary bilge pump lit again. I knew that there was a little water in the bilge when I left the dock, but not enough to pump out. The fore and aft pitching of the boat caused the water to trip the external bilge pump float valve and turned on the pump. The problem was that the float stuck in the up position leaving the pump sucking air. I resolved the situation by pushing the float down with my finger, potentially saving me from burning out my bilge pump. It's also told me that I need a new float.

These indicators for the bilge pumps are effective, quick and cheap insurance. Call me conservative, but you can never have too much information about how much water's inside your boat!

**Things I'd do differently:** Line up the holes for the lights in the panel a bit better.

Cost: US\$15.00 (lamps and wire)

Time: 1.5 hour for all three