

## Fresh Water Onboard by Bob Salnick



Tonight, Eolian has a pronounced heel to starboard. Not that she is ever level and completely stationary, but it is enough where we are noticing it. I just came in from outside, having put the dock water hose into her port water tank. That heel is an indication that we are about to run out of water, and as everyone knows, that never happens at an opportune moment. People who live in houses don't get to use the tilt of the floor as an indication that their water is about to be cut off. Or to use water to trim their house until the floors are level.

Eolian has two water tanks - 160 gallons on the port side, and another 160 gallons on the starboard side. She also has two equivalent diesel tanks, one on each side. At the moment, the port diesel tank is empty and the starboard one is a little more than half full. Thus we are keeping the starboard water tank empty and filling the port one. This keeps things more or less level.

This task is one that is enjoyable in the summer, often an opportunity to socialize or to just enjoy the scenery out here at the end of the dock. But tonight, in the dark with rain spitting, it is not so much fun. So I am back inside and while I am typing, I am listening to the liquid sound of water running into the tank.

Some boats on the dock choose to bypass the hassle of this ritual, and hook up a dock hose direct to their onboard water system. Having seen two boats nearly destroyed by this practice, it is one we do not follow. In both cases, some portion of the onboard water system failed. Fresh water then pours in as fast as the city of Seattle can deliver it (and they have lots... more than enough to sink a boat).

In one of the incidents, the broken water fitting was directly above the shore power inlet, thus delivering a torrent of water over the 110v wiring. That boat had a functioning bilge pump and the break was small enough that it could keep up. But the water pouring over the shore power could have easily started a fire.

In the other incident, a hose came off a fitting. In this case, the bilge pump malfunctioned, and the boat partially sank before the water was shut off, resulting in a large insurance claim, and months of disrupted living while the repairs were made.

Without a direct hookup, if we experience a water system failure, all that will happen is that the water we already have onboard will relocate a little lower in the hull.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to have a direct hookup - for example if you have a washer and dryer onboard, or have a large family. In these cases, they just have to live with the risk, and remember to turn off the city water before leaving the boat to go to work.

OK, the sound of water trickling has stopped, and the bilge pump just ran for a couple seconds - that means that the tank is full and is overflowing into the bilge. Time to go out and put away the hose.

Bob Salnick

DE45 s/v Eolian

Living aboard: Windborne in Puget Sound

<http://windborneinpugetsound.blogspot.com>