



Charles Mason

# Lock it up

A lock could save your outboard, but just how good are they? **Elizabeth McAlpine** tries out some popular models

**T**here's nothing worse than walking down the dock to find that what was once your quick little dinghy is now nothing more than a rowboat without oars, the victim of outboard-motor theft. Protecting a small outboard engine can be a considerable task, and taking it off every night is a hassle and often a backache. It can all leave you wondering if a rowboat is a more economical option.

Outboard motor locks are easy to use and cost effective. Engine thieves usually shy away from stealing an outboard secured by more than just a few screws. But are some locks better than others? How well will they resist a determined thief?

*BoatWorks* editors put them to the test on a typical 6-horsepower engine, using bolt cutters, a crowbar, a hacksaw, and a hammer. We then rated them on build quality, ease of installation, and effectiveness. There are square-tube locks, nut-and-bolt locks, and an innovative covering for a clamp screw. Prices range from \$48 to \$80, so a good locking system won't break the bank.

## MASTERLOCK

The MasterLock Outboard Motor Lock Model #430 consists of an 11½" long square steel tube that locks directly onto the motor with a padlock. The open side of the tube slides over the two horizontal clamp screws on the engine's mounting bracket, and the padlock secures it in place.

The lock is clearly visible when in place, which is a theft deterrent in itself. When we tested the MasterLock, it rattled on the clamp screws when the outboard was running. The padlock was easily bypassed by cutting off the small strip at the end of the tube with a few snips of a bolt cutter. We were then able to slide the steel strip off the clamp screws. If a thief isn't too concerned with keeping the engine intact, a couple of heavy blasts with a hammer could snap the engine's clamp screws right off.

The lock costs from \$18 to \$24. Its design and structure are imposing enough that a thief may decide not to take it on. There will likely be another outboard on the dock with no visible lock. [www.masterlocks.com](http://www.masterlocks.com)

## MARINE SECURITIES STERN LOCK

The Stern Lock Outboard Motor Lock is intended for larger outboards. The lock is designed to be a permanent installation since a larger engine is harder to remove. All components are stainless steel.

**TOP TIP**

Although all of the locks were rated for marine use, a little waterproof grease at the beginning of the season ensures the lock can still be undone when required.



The bolt is  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter. A bit of marine silicone is applied, and the bolt slides directly through the outboard's bolt hole and through a hole drilled in the transom. An inch-wide lock sleeve covers the nut. The lock covers the end of the bolt and cannot be turned unless the key is inserted. Once twisted on tightly, the lock is fixed onto the bolt.

This lock is impressive. It is thick, heavy, and virtually impossible to twist off without stripping the threads on the bolt with pliers. Hammering the lock end could snap the bolt. Sawing would be slow, and it's likely that the saw blade would dull before any significant progress was made. It's a little more discreet than the models for smaller outboards. It doesn't rattle or shake, and it fits tightly onto the engine (as long as the transom and mounting plate are 3 to 4 inches thick). A rubber cap over the keyhole will deter rusting.

This lock is priced at \$47 to \$60. It will do well as a permanent installation on a larger outboard engine. [www.trickmarine.net](http://www.trickmarine.net)



Bandits beware: The Stazo motor lock stayed put despite heavy blasts with a hammer.

**McGARD**

The McGard is one of the most popular types of outboard locks. The smaller model can be used on a larger engine, or a hole can be drilled into the transom of a smaller boat close to the mounting bracket. Its stainless-steel construction is sturdy, and the system comes with a tube of thread-locking adhesive.

Adhesive is applied to the entire length of the 4-inch bolt before it is inserted into the transom with

the washers on the outside. A nut with a free-spinning collar is twisted onto the end of the bolt with the help of a brass key. The lock is camouflaged by the bulk of the engine. It's simple to install and to deploy with the key.

If a thief were determined to steal your engine, sawing or hammering off the end of this bolt



Marine Securities Stern Lock

McGard

The MasterLock (left) is secured with a padlock. For more permanent security, try the Marine Securities Stern Lock (above). McGard offers a similar unit.



Hammer, saw, pry: We tested all the locks to see which one held up the best.

would be easy. To make breaking the bolt more difficult, the installation can be reversed, so the lock is installed inside the hull. This will also serve to protect it from constant exposure to water. It's possible to spin the nut off with a good set of locking pliers on the collar, so the lock functions more like anti-theft wheel nuts on a car.

One of the cheaper models at \$32.30, the lock comes with order forms for new parts and keys. [www.mcgard.com](http://www.mcgard.com)

**STAZO**

The STAZO SmartLock Outboard Motor Lock is a stainless-steel, two-piece set that slides together to form a box that sits on the transom. There are no sharp edges, and the lock is heavy and sturdy when assembled. A turning key keeps it in place. This lock can be used on any outboard that attaches with toggle clamps.

Once the clamp screws are opened, the back part of the lock slides behind the clamp-screw



Sleek and secure, the Stazo (left) attracts attention. The Durasafe (right) logo is clear, but that may not be enough.

## ENGINE LOCK ALTERNATIVES

We stopped by a local hardware store to see what we could find as a substitute for a dedicated engine lock. Aha! What we found was plastic-coated wire with a loop at each end.

Depending on the type of motor and the dinghy's transom, the chain can be attached to the dinghy by looping one end through the other then wrapping it through a part of the engine mounting plate. We had a handy carry handle in our dinghy transom to attach it to the boat. A small padlock

with key to secure the ends is an inexpensive and effective alternative. We were able, without much trouble, to find a brass lock labeled for marine use.

It is possible to cut the padlock or chain with bolt cutters. However, the cable-and-lock is highly visible—a theft deterrent that might make someone in the market for a free outboard think again. We paid a total of \$14.50 for the lock and cable at our local hardware store. ■

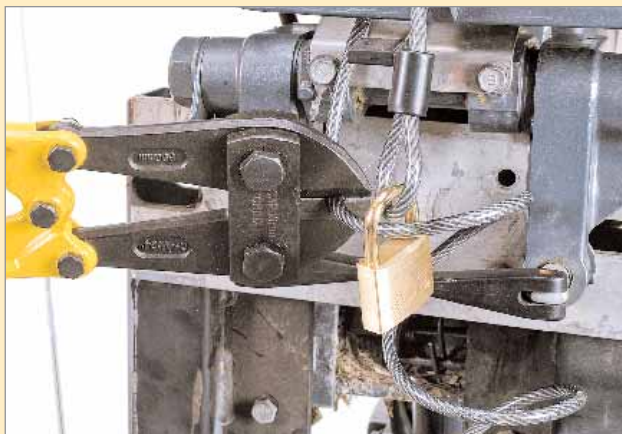


plate. The clamp screw, when tightened, mounts the lock onto the transom. For a more permanent setting, the back part of the lock can be bolted through the transom.

The motor clamp-screw handle should be vertical. When the front of the lock slides on, the turning key locks it in place. The actual locking device is covered inside the box with an additional stainless-steel cylinder. This leaves the screw handle unable to spin.

The lock sits tightly against the inside of the transom. Rubber padding between the two parts of the lock prevents scraping and vibration damage. The turning key may require a little elbow grease, but when the lock is employed, it stands out as a theft deterrent. It could only be hammered off to break the engine bolt. The brand name is clear on the front and side, and the keys have a code in case a replacement is needed.

This lock is heavy, but pricey, costing almost

RESOURCES

Brand	Style	Size	Price	Contact
DuraSafe	sliding square tube with cylinder lock	10 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " × 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	\$21–28	www.durasafe-usa.com 866-544-5615
MasterLock	sliding square tube with padlock	11 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " × 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	\$18–24	www.masterlocks.com 800-778-2217
McGard	nut and bolt with spinning key	4" bolt	\$32.30	www.mcgard.com 716-662-8980
STAZO	two-piece sliding lock with internal key closure	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " × 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	\$79.95	www.sailorssolutions.com 631-754-1945
Marine Securities Stern Lock	heavy-duty bolt with locking torque when tightened: and cover sleeve transom must be about 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> "	6 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " bolt	\$47–60	www.trickmarine.net 866-921-4553

\$80. The lock is sturdy, and the actual locking device is internal. Hammering it off would be difficult and noisy, so this product was our top pick. [www.sailorssolutions.com](http://www.sailorssolutions.com)

**DURASAFE**

The powder-coated steel DuraSafe Outboard Motor Lock is similar to the MasterLock. It's an inch shorter and has a sliding brass barrel lock instead of the padlock. Once the clamp screws are tightened and positioned horizontally, the sliding square tube can be placed over the clamps. The barrel is then pushed upward and locked into place with the key.

This lock won't spoil the look of your dinghy. The foam strip on the inside of the tube reduces vibration, although smaller outboards will still make it rattle and shake. The yellow DuraSafe logo on the front of the tube is a surefire way to tell a thief that he or she has an obstacle to reckon with. The lock is inside a cylinder and is harder than the MasterLock to hack off. However, the end of the bar was easy to cut away with bolt cutters. It is also possible to saw off the lock end of the bar and slide the entire tube off.

The Durasafe runs from \$21 to \$28. The thoughtful design and logo location make it a good choice unless the thief is toting a bolt cutter. [www.durasafe-usa.com](http://www.durasafe-usa.com)

**THE VERDICT**

After rigorous demolition tests, the STAZO Motor Lock is our Editors' Choice. It's visible yet tidy, easy to use, but difficult to break. Although the lock is the most expensive of the group, it is much less expensive than a new outboard, thus is a good investment. Any lock on your outboard is better than none—just having one visible is a theft deterrent. ■



Removing both the Durasafe and Masterlock models was easy with just a couple of snips of the bolt cutters. A longer metal portion at the closed end of the bar would solve the problem.



Quick and easy, the Durasafe slips over the outboard toggle clamps.