

Boat owners making the switch to cleaner, quieter power of electric motors

Showing a new side of boating at the Dana Point Boat Show

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Kevin Kearns of Elco Motors explains how the wind turbine and solar panels aboard a Hunter sailboat charge the boat's 20-horsepower electric motor, creating a zero-emissions propulsion system.

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Jakobsen, are some of the most recent converts to electric propulsion in the boating world, taking the concept made famous by the small Duffy electric boats that populate harbors across the nation, and bulking up the power to propel a 36-foot, 7-ton sailboat.

And to handle the installation, the couple chose Elco Motors, who have been powering boats electrically since the company began ferrying passengers in 1892 at the Chicago World's Fair.

After years of making powerboats, the company has revived its electric roots, creating a line of electric motors in the 6- to 100-horsepower range, capable of powering boats from 18-foot to 75-foot sailboats at around 6 to 8 knots (7 to 9.2 mph).

Aboard Laguna Beach resident Lydie Denier's 36-foot Hunter sailboat, the silence is noticeable.

Still within the confines of Newport Harbor, Denier hasn't raised the sails and the motor is still running, but the drone of a diesel-powered engine typical of cruising sailboats is absent.

"We like to try new things; we have an electric car and electric bikes, so it made sense for us to get an electric-powered boat," Denier said.

Denier and her husband, Michael

The electric drive system replaces the noise, vibration, heat and fumes associated with diesel engines.

“You don’t hear this boat. It’s like a Chevy Volt on the street; it’s quiet, and there’s no smell from the fumes,” Denier said.

Kevin Kearns, Elco’s senior vice president of sales and marketing, who moved about five years ago to Elco from Duffy Electric Boats, said the sailboat market is the target.

“We’re not yet at the point where we’re producing the speed needed for planing hulls and powerboats, but for sailboats who want to replace their current engines, it’s a great fit,” said Kearns, who will be showing Elco’s alternative propulsion methods at the Dana Point Harbor Boat Show this weekend.

The company will have a booth on land showing how the electric motor works, and will also have on display a 27-foot Hunter sailboat with a 20-horsepower-equivalent electric motor that can be recharged by solar panels and a wind turbine on deck.

“We want to have a place to captivate and explain that boating doesn’t have to be fumes and oil changes,” Kearns said. “It can be clean and easy.”

The inclusion of Elco Motors at the Dana Point show illustrates the attempts from boat show organizer Ray Hebert to bring “clean and green” options to a recreational activity not known for being environmentally friendly.

Hebert, who has produced the Dana Point Harbor Boat Show the past 14 years, included a Green Expo portion of the show in 2010 and 2011, setting aside booths and exhibitor space for clean and environmentally friendly boating products.

But with limited interest from companies, Hebert scrapped the idea the past two years.

“Unfortunately, the show is not a nonprofit, but we continue to try and invite as many green exhibitors as we can get,” Hebert said.

This year, the show will include Elco Motors, along with electric propulsion system converters Electric Yachts of Southern California, multiple solar panel companies, and Riding Currents, which converted a 21-foot Duffy electric boat into a solar-powered craft.

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<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/electric-615939-boat-elco.html>



The Dana Point Harbor Boat Show runs Thursday through Sunday, featuring more than 100 boats in the water and 50 boats on display ashore.

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Those who attend the boat show Thursday through Sunday can check out boats, kayaks, paddleboards and more at the OC Sailing & Events Center docks in Dana Point Harbor.

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Lydie Denier of Laguna Beach poses alongside the 36-foot sailboat of the same name that she and her husband own. The couple opted for electric propulsion to replace the typical diesel-powered engine.

TAYLOR HILL, STAFF



Ray Hebert, Dana Point Harbor Boat Show producer, has been in the boat show business for more than 25 years.

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Kayaks and paddleboards will also be on display at the Dana Point Harbor Boat Show this year.

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