

## STUFFING BOX

Our stuffing box leak situation is little different from other Vegas. Short of hauling and rebuilding, which according to past newsletters no professional knows how to do, a few treatments have been tried. After each days use the box was stuffed with a dark green grease recommended by a local marina. It did not do a complete job as each time the engine is run grease is forced out and then my process restarts. Meanwhile, Washington Marina has recommended trying a beige colored waterpump grease named "LUBRIPLATE," part #04001. I will report later how this works. I know this is only treating the problem, but I'm up the creek as to what to do. It is obvious that the shaft, seals, the box, or something is worn -- but what to do and if it is repaired, how will it work and for how long?

A remedy was discovered however, to slow the leak; that was to push the control lever to the extreme feathered position while berthed or sailing. I run the engine very little in this area and it's a good thing. A 15 minute run results in 3 minutes of pumping. At that point the bilge water is at the bottom of the batteries.

This stuffing box thing is plaguing a number of us it seems, but according to the newsletters, Nat Natto is the only one to solve it by replacing it with a US substitute. Could it be possible for Nat to write up the specs on his replacement for all members to consider? I'm tired of replacing batteries, battery clamps, carpets and a really messy cleanup.

- Bill Carrico

At this point (1978) I am sold on replacing the stuffing box with a conventional one - cost will be the same as replacing box seals with the exception of the cost of the new stuffing box.

The shaft removal is not in itself that difficult - the close quarters and tight fit make it seem that way. If you are going to the expense of removing the shaft I suggest

that you replace everything from the engine back and that you have them check the main bearings.

If you ever pull the shaft, place two or three grease seals on each side of the stuffing box so when the seals go you won't have to pull the shaft again.

- Nat Natto

For anyone having stuffing box leaking problems -- does your bilge mysteriously fill up with seawater? -- I can offer lots of experience. While replacing the seals themselves is theoretically simple, it does require removing the propeller shaft from the reversing unit, which probably is the most complicated, difficult, and expensive operation on the Vega (and so far one which no local mechanic seems to be able to handle successfully). Although Nat Natto says he replaced his stuffing box with an American type, my engineer-mechanic says this cannot be done because the Vega prop shaft is only one inch and the smallest American stuffing box is made for a one and three-quarter inch shaft. I had rigged up a fixed grease gun installation in one of the cockpit lockers, connected directly to the stuffing box through a copper tube, so that I can replace the grease that is lost every time the motor runs, without the trouble of removing the cockpit sole.

- Art Levin

Two makes of grease are recommended for the stuffing box: Drydene Water Pump grease, or "Never-Seez" grease. Both are heavy greases which do not break down under heat and wear. The stuffing box (under the cockpit sole) should be checked at least once a year if there is no excess leaking into the bilge, and repacked with grease by hand (not under pressure). If there is excess leaking into the bilge after each time the engine is run, especially after the boat stands unused for several days or a week, then you have the problem described above.

- Art Levin

I enlisted the help of Master Lubricants of Phila., PA (wonderful people!) in selecting the right grease for the stuffing box with a special additive to make the grease very sticky so it would not wash out when the engine ran. They developed M24P, a thick, highly waterproof, sticky grease. It comes in 8 oz. tubes, the tip of which fits the stuffing box hole very nicely. The cost of the tube is \$2.75. The grease can be ordered (\$30 minimum order) from Master Lubricants, Meadow and Jackson Streets, Phila., PA 19148. Check with me before ordering, since I may have a supply of tubes. I also installed a six-inch inspection plate in the cockpit sole above the stuffing box to facilitate greasing.

- Rick Woytowich  
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Jim Ranti advises that a standard American stuffing box 7/8" machined out to 25mm will do the job. Essex Machine Shop in Essex, CT 06426 will sell the stuffing box for \$26.95 (1982) and bore it out to 25mm for \$30 more. The in-and-out movement of the prop feathering control sleeve will give no trouble because of the greasy packing (which must be ordered separately). The original rubber tubing over the shaft will fit perfectly around the 7/8" stuffing box. The large tension nut on the forward side of the stuffing box must be only hand tight, and the engine and shaft must be in good alignment.

Art Koenig also changed his stuffing box to a standard 7/8", machined out to 25mm. Jim Nardelli similarly installed an American stuffing box, but he advises that 25mm is 0.9843 inches and he milled his at 2/1000 over to 0.9863 inches, making installation a little easier.

Karen and Bill Sides changed their leaky stuffing box to an American 1" box made by PERKO. They found that the 1" stuffing box works fine on the 25mm shaft because the packing takes up the difference. The change-over could be done with the boat in the water, but it may leak like crazy while doing it.

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A member of the Swedish VEGA Association, Henry Gustafsson, P.O. Box 2284, S-310 58 Vessigebro, Sweden, has developed a new, improved stuffing box he claims will rid Vega owners of the leaking problem. He also has spare parts for the Vega at very competitive prices. His company is called Vegetillbehor.

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After rebuilding the original stuffing box in 1985 and having it fail again in two months, we installed Vegetillbehor's new stuffing box, stern bearing, and stainless steel operating sleeve in the Spring of 1986. The stuffing box is excellent (no leaks), but I will have to replace the cutlass bearing again this year. We ordered quite a few parts and accessories from Vegetillbehor last Spring and were very pleased with price and quality. The only problem was the length of time in getting delivery.

- Noel & Maureen Bearce