

What about the Smart Plug?

Written by Ed Sherman

Monday, 22 August 2011 14:10 - Last Updated Monday, 22 August 2011 14:51



One of our readers wrote in over the weekend:

Comment author: Marilyn K

Comment text: How many lives are lost each year due to faulty shore line power? How many boats and Marinas are lost? It would seem logical that if the National Electric code folks could prevent deaths by endorsing this product they would. What logical reason do they give for not endorsing it after this product has proven it is a safer choice? I'm assuming you are referring to my earlier post touting the Smart Plug as a safer choice for boaters. That post is here: <http://www.edsboattips.com/construction-a-technical/185-smart-plug-is-a-safer-choice> for those of you who missed it.

Well Marilyn you ask a good question here. But to answer it completely is not as easy as it might seem. First of all is the matter of "endorsement" as you describe it. No standards writing body can actually endorse any product, not NEC not NFPA not ABYC not ISO, no one. The reason for this is simple, it represents a potential conflict of interest in any case.

What the ABYC has done over the years is to develop what we describe as a "performance-based" approach to Standards writing, which is a whole different than having Standards in place that describe how you will manufacture a product or what specific components must be included in the design of a given product.

This approach is really the only way we (the ABYC) see to develop Standards that remain relevant and that do not stifle technological innovation.

To answer your questions about deaths and fires, I do not know the total numbers on a national basis, but can tell you that the number of fires and deaths is high and growing every year. A

What about the Smart Plug?

Written by Ed Sherman

Monday, 22 August 2011 14:10 - Last Updated Monday, 22 August 2011 14:51

related article that addresses one of the side-effects of faulty boats and shore power systems can be found in the article here, which a close friend and work colleague wrote for the Boat US Seaworthy magazine some time ago: <http://www.boatus.com/seaworthy/kritz.asp>

The Smart Plug, if adopted with some additional modifications, could help to minimize some of the risks we now associate with existing shore power systems. That much I'm sure of.

I can't answer your question about the why the NEC is being so difficult with the maker of the Smart Plug other than to say that from my understanding of the situation, the NEC has said that they would consider adding the plug configuration Smart Plug uses to their accepted list if the maker of the Smart Plug would give up their patent rights to the product.....Again, I see that as stifling innovation. People have a right to make a buck for their work efforts it seems to me.

Anyhow, I am proceeding with some more writings about the Smart Plug in trade related insider publications in my effort to get this ball rolling in the right direction. If it takes the normal course these sort of issues take, I expect it to take five to seven years to get any change from the Standards writing people.