



Spinning comfortably

The Seakeeper gyro reduces a boat's motion up to 90 percent

By Michael Crowley

Imagine a device that makes crossing a rolling deck less hazardous and keeps you from having to wedge yourself in your bunk so you won't get tossed on the cabin floor.

The Seakeeper is a control moment gyro that can reduce that rolling motion by 70 to 90 percent. They've gone

Seakeeper's new gyros are more compact than previous models.

on sportfishing boats, crew boats and Navy torpedo recovery boats.

Seakeeper is now trying to break into the commercial fishing market, says the company's Brook Stevens. At least one Alaska salmon seiner has a Seakeeper gyro, and two are going on a pair of tuna boats being built at Wesmac Custom Boats in Surry, Maine.

Seakeeper has offered three models since about 2008. Most recently, the

product line was redone with five new models. The technology "is the same, but we have been able to scale them down," says Stevens. The new models are not only smaller and lighter, they are also much more affordable.

Like the previous models, the new Seakeeper gyros use a large steel flywheel that spins at a high rate of speed (10,700 rpm for the smallest Seakeeper gyro) in a near vacuum. When the boat starts to roll, the energy in the spinning flywheel transfers right-angle torque into the boat's stringers to counteract the rolling motion.

Besides reducing the size and weight of the gyros, they are now able to tilt in a fore-and-aft direction up to 70 degrees versus the previous 60 degrees. "That allows it to take the torque curve and spread it throughout the roll period of the whole boat," Stevens says.

The smallest model is the Seakeeper 5 for boats up to 20 tons and 30 to 50 feet long. It measures 30.1" x 29.8" x 24.7", weighs 790 pounds and costs \$29,900. The previous model for a 20-ton boat weighed 1,069 pounds and cost \$54,000.

The largest gyro is the Seakeeper 35 for boats up to 140 tons and longer than 100 feet. It measures 54.3" x 55.9" x 43.5", weighs 3,920 pounds and costs \$197,900.

The largest previous gyro was for boats to 100 tons. It weighed 2,950 pounds and cost \$210,000.

The remaining three models are for boats up to 35 tons and 65 feet long, 70 tons and 80 feet, and 100 tons and 100 feet in length.

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