

DIY Anchor Rode Markers

Marking your anchor rode at specific spots will allow you to make sure you let out the proper length of rode to get the required scope. You can buy ready-made markers, but I prefer using simple plastic cable ties, sometimes called zip ties.

To prepare your anchor rode take your entire length of rode out of the anchor locker and fake it out on the dock. You do this at the dock for several reasons. You need to make sure it is in good condition, find out how much you have and make sure the bitter end is attached to the boat. You will save wear and tear on your gelcoat if you do this while still at the dock. Also, here you have a more stable platform for marking the rode. If you have all chain rode and use a windlass, you may want to mark it with fluorescent spray paint, as this will last longer than cable ties, which tend to get sheared off by the windlass sprockets.

If you are using cable ties, pick three colors that you have

plenty of. Then make a sign on a large sheet of paper telling what each color signifies and have it laminated. Your sign might look like this:

Color = Feet
Yellow = 10'
Blue = 50'
Red = 100'

Tape the sign to the inside cover of your anchor locker. Now mark all the lengths that you will need. Put two yellow ties at 20 feet, a blue and two yellows at 70 feet, put a red and a blue at 150 feet and two reds at 200 feet. The beauty of this system is that each mark reads independently of the others. Even if some of the marks are missing, you can still read each one. Resist the temptation to just put a mark every 25 or 50 feet. If you do it that way, once you've lost one mark, you've lost your whole system.

If you have three-strand laid line, grab the rode with two hands and twist it so that you create a space between strands to poke the

cable tie through, so that the tie is wrapped around two of the strands. Then tighten the tie so it is as tight as possible, and cut off the excess. If you have woven anchor rode, circle the line with the tie and tighten it as much as possible so it won't slide. If you are chartering a boat with all chain and don't want to permanently alter the chain by spray painting marks on it, you can wrap the cable tie around a link of chain and tighten it. You may have to periodically replace the ties that are sheared off by the windlass.

Color cable ties are much better than the plastic anchor rode markers that you can buy at the marine store. The reason is this: the official anchor rode markers are all the same color and usually printed only on one side. To read

the marker you need to grab the marker and turn it over to read the number. Also, the thin plastic is not as sturdy as color cable ties.

My friends and I set up this system on several charter boats in the Caribbean and Great Lakes, and came back the following year to find several boats with the original signs affixed to the anchor lockers and the system still in use. --Joan Gilmore



Brightly colored cable ties, readily available at most hardware stores, make great markers for measuring rode length. Adam Colson photo

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