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Plastic Fuel Fill Grounding

Recent events have caused the boating industry to examine the policy regarding the bonding of plastic body fuel fills with metallic caps and retaining chains. Existing USCG & ABYC policy states that the bonding of these components is voluntary. A study by IMANNA Laboratories has shown that connecting the metallic retaining chain and cap of a plastic body fuel fill assembly to a boats bonding system may result in electrostatic discharge from a land-based fuel pump nozzle to the metallic components of the assembly when the boat is not in the water. This condition does not exist when the boat is in the water due to the equalizations of the ground potentials between the fuel pump nozzle and the boat's bonding system.

It is recommended by ABYC and the USCG that new installations of this type of fuel fill assembly DO NOT INCLUDE any attachment to the boats bonding system. The U.S. Coast Guard and ABYC still require that METALLIC body fuel fills be bonded. There have been no reported explosions or fires resulting from this phenomenon. Therefore no substantial risk of personal injury to the public exists, and formal defect notification (recall) by boat and/or equipment manufacturers is not required by the Coast Guard in this case. The ABYC Project Technical Committee has included this topic in the soon to be published H-24 Gasoline Fuel Systems on Boats that eliminates the bonding connection for plastic body fuel fills with metallic caps and retaining chains.

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