



ALASKA BOATERS TIP SHEET

Bilge-water/Cleaning

Oil and Toxins Pollute!

Oil and toxins in Alaskan waters pollute the environment that we depend on for our enjoyment, food and livelihood. Federal and State laws recognize these impacts and prohibit the discharge of oil or oily water overboard. The discharge of even small amounts of oil from a boat is illegal. Also illegal is the use of dispersants or soap to breakup the oil in a bilge and then discharge it overboard. The resulting oily, soapy water is more toxic to wildlife and the aquatic environment and much more difficult to clean up.

Bilge cleaning should be part of the routine maintenance on a vessel. Below are some practices mariners use to keep and maintain clean bilges.

Clean up Your Act!

- ◆ Keep your boat's engine clean and well maintained. Eliminate oil or fuel leaks.
- ◆ Regularly check fuel and oil fittings leading to the tanks and engine.
- ◆ Use appropriate fuel and oil handling procedures and know how much fuel is in the tank prior to filling.
- ◆ Place an oil absorbent pad and tray under your engine to collect small spills and accidental drips.
- ◆ Pump your bilge less by keeping rain, snowmelt and seawater from leaking into your boat.

- ◆ Secure a sorbent pad or a pillow in the bilge and monitor it throughout the season. If it is oiled, find the source and correct.
- ◆ Before pumping the bilge, soak up any floating oil with sorbent materials (newspaper, rags or paper towels only in an emergency).
- ◆ Do not mix soap or detergent with oily bilge water, this will be more toxic than oil alone and results in large fines. Try using an enzyme-based bilge cleaner which is less polluting.
- ◆ If you have an automatic bilge pump, always make sure there is no floating oil in the bilge.
- ◆ For bigger boats, install a bilge water filter that will help remove most contaminants.
- ◆ Do not pump oily bilge water overboard – use a marine bilge pump out service (check with the Harbormaster for availability).

Remember . . .

Take the necessary steps to protect yourself and Alaska's marine resources. It is the right thing to do and it is the law.

Report oil spills to:

National Response Center: 1-800-424-8802
Staffed 24 hours a day by the USCG.

