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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Overboard Discharge of Fuel and Oil Is Toxic to the Marine Environment

In many areas, it is common to see fuel sheen on the water surface near boats. Although there may only be a small amount from a few boats, the cumulative impacts can be damaging. After they have entered the marine environment, oils and fuels have a tendency to accumulate in sediments and in marine organisms. These harmful substances most commonly enter the waters through bilge pumping, fueling, and improper response to spills. You can help to protect the delicate marine environment by following some simple tips.

- NEVER add bilge-cleaning detergent or emulsifiers to your bilge and then pump bilge water overboard. These compounds do not eliminate oil. They simply break it up so it mixes with water and spreads over a wider area.
- Use oil-absorbing bilge socks or pillows in the bilge of all boats with inboard engines. Consider using bilge socks in compartments near outboards.
- Examine and replace oil absorbent materials as needed. Dispose of oil and fuel saturated bilge socks/pillows at proper locations.

### **Bilge Pumping**

Prior to pumping, inspect the bilge to ensure that no fuel or oil has been spilled. DO NOT discharge bilge water if there is sheen to it. Check and fix all leaks. Replace oil-saturated bilge pillows. If you have a large vessel, consider installing an oil-water separator in your discharge lines. If dirty bilge water cannot be sufficiently cleaned to allow legal discharge, make arrangements with a marina capable of properly disposing of tainted water.

Oil and fuel absorption pads and pillows are now readily available from numerous manufacturers. Have these materials in your bilge and inspect them monthly. If there is more bilge water than usual, find and rectify the fault. When pumping bilges, be aware of the environment because polluting waterways is an offense. If there is oil or fuel in the bilge water, use special absorbent pads to clean up and dispose of them properly.

### **Fueling**

Prevent fuel from falling into the water during fueling. Do not top off tanks; know the capacities of your fuel tanks prior to filling. Place an absorbent pad or container over the fuel fill or under the fuel vent to collect accidental overflow. Listen to the filter pipe to anticipate when the tank is full and to avoid backsplash. Stop pumping at the first sign of fuel escape. To prevent spillage from tank vents, install a fuel-air separator or an air whistle in your tank's vent line.

### **Spill Response**

Stop the source of the spill first, and then focus on containing it. This is best done with oil boom

materials from a nearby marina or your Harbor Master. When a spill does occur, it should be reported immediately by calling the Oil Spill Response Team at (603) 271-2900. DO NOT use emulsifiers or dispersants (soaps) to treat a spill; federal law prohibits this. For small cleanups, cover the spill with absorbent materials. When cleanup is complete, properly dispose of used spill response materials.

### **Other Boating Tips for a Clean Environment**

- Use absorbent pads to clean engine spaces containing oil and grease.
- Reduce your use of toxic cleaning products.
- Do Not pump sewage waste overboard. Use shore-side pumpout station facilities.
- Do Not dump trash, plastics, debris, or cleaners overboard. Dispose of these items in shore-side dumpsters.
- Recycle all possible wastes, including, oil, oil filters, paint, batteries, paper, aluminum, plastic, and glass.
- Dispose of hazardous wastes at a household hazardous waste collection event.