
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Guidelines for Marinas: Proper Boat Washing Procedures

Boats have three types of washing needs: the bottom, which typically contains the growth of algae; the main deck, which collects atmospheric dust, pollen and film from rainfall; and the boat interior, containing sand, silt and food materials from passengers. To meet the washing needs of each area, two types of washing procedures are necessary: boat cleaning in the water and boat cleaning out of the water. Both washing practices are regulated by both the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES). The State is committed to keeping our public waters clean. DES's authority to enforce discharges into state waters is provided for in the following RSA:

Section 485-A:13

I. (a) "It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to discharge or dispose of any sewage or waste (wash water, detergents or paint chips) to the surface water or groundwater of the state (of New Hampshire) without first obtaining a written permit from the department of environmental services..."

This means that **all** activities must be conducted in a manner that prevents discharge of waste water to surface or ground water.

Boat Cleaning Procedures

Marinas usually provide boat wash service to their customers who want to protect their investments by keeping their boats clean and neat. Marinas have to pay special attention to their boat washing procedures, as well as their customers' procedures, because most marinas are located on or next to major water bodies and waste water can have an impact on water quality.

Boat Cleaning-In the water

Always use cleaning methods that prevent or contain the release of pollutants to surface waters.

- When possible, remove the boat from the water.
- Use a spray wash that does not require a water rinse.
- Use a phosphate-free detergent to wash the outside of the boat. Remove the detergent with an absorbent product like a sponge or mop. Extract the waste water from the absorbent product and place it into the wash bucket.
- Educate customers on the negative impact of cleaners. Carry spray types of cleaners that do not require rinsing and products that DO NOT contain phosphorus.

Boat Cleaning-Out of the water

- Do not discharge any wash rinse to surface waters.
- Rinse boats in designated areas where the water can be contained and treated.
- Make sure that only environmentally friendly products are used during washing procedures.

Tip:

Wash boat interiors like you wash your kitchen floor-with a bucket and sponge. Do not empty the bucket wash water to the ground or surface water! Set operating procedures to handle wash water properly, such as empty to sewer (with permission from WWTF), and then educate your employees.

Designate Boat Washing Areas

There are several recommended design options for proper boat wash stations. The most important design option is that the station must be located far enough away from surface water so no wastewater is discharged into surface waters. Use the following best management practices to design and designate areas for boat washing.

- Boat washing huts should have concrete floors that slope to a central floor drain. The floor drain usually leads to a local wastewater treatment facility, but can also discharge to a holding tank. To use the sewer system, you must first obtain permission from the wastewater treatment facility. If you choose a holding tank, the tank must be registered with DES. To register call (603) 271-2858.
- Outdoor boat wash stations may be on a permeable surface, like gravel, as long as all wash water seeps into the ground. Such a discharge requires a groundwater discharge permit from DES (603-271-2858).
- Wash water cannot be discharged to a storm drain.

Special Instructions to Include in Boat Owner Contracts

If boat owners are allowed to wash their own boats at a marina, they should do so only in clearly marked designated areas. These areas should be advertised with signs posted throughout the marina.

Boat owners should be made aware of what they can and cannot do. All activities should prevent discharge of wash water to surface and ground water. Remember: protect water quality.

Educate Boat Owners

Many boat owners do not know how their action may negatively impact water quality, or how they can prevent water quality degradation. Most importantly, boaters might not know that their discharges to water bodies are illegal, or that washing their boats can be done in a way to prevent these discharges. Marinas can help boaters take responsibility for their actions through education. Marinas should not have the burden of compliance without cooperation from their customers.

To educate boaters about their environmental responsibilities:

- Post environmental rules at your facility.

- Post operation guidelines to be followed while under contract at your facility.
- Offer environmental-based educational brochures to boat owners.
- Institute a no tolerance policy for blatant disregard of the rules.
- Post water quality statistics.

Use and Encourage the Use of Natural Cleaners

The most natural cleaner and the best solvent is water. Clean boats often with water, elbow grease, and a coarse cloth. Other natural cleaners include: baking soda, borax and lemon or lime juice. These natural cleaners should be used in place of solvent-based cleaners. Natural cleaners can have negative environmental impacts and should be used in moderation. All other cleaners, including those that contain chemical solvents, should be approved for use by DES. To get approval call (603) 271-2858.

To protect water quality:

- Provide environmentally-friendly cleaners for customers to purchase.
- All boat washing products used and provided by a marina should be non-toxic, phosphate-free and biodegradable.

A Word about Biodegradable and Non-Toxic

There are many cleaning products available that say "biodegradable" and "non-toxic" on the label. "Biodegradable" simply means that it will break down over time. All things break down over time. "Non-toxic" standards are based on human reaction; it does not take fish or other organisms into consideration. If you have a product that you regularly use for boat washing that contains these labels, and are unsure of the product, contact DES at (603) 271-2858 for more information.

For more information visit the New Hampshire Pollution Prevention Program's web page at www.des.nh.gov/nhppp, or call (800) 273-9469.