



Emptying bilge water

What's the problem?

It is an offence to cause pollution of controlled waters (including Whitby estuary and harbour out to 3 miles) either deliberately or accidentally.

Diesel, oil and petroleum spirit, sewage and **contaminated bilge water** can all cause pollution if discharged into these waters.

1 litre of oil can pollute 1 million litres of water! Only 5% of oil and fuel pollution in the water is from large oil spills, the majority comes from everyday sources such as re-fuelling, engine emissions and oil leaks.

What to do if your bilge water is contaminated?

It is an offence to discharge contaminated bilge water into any watercourses. If bilge water is contaminated, it should be pumped to suitable facilities ashore, or absorbents should be used. On no account should detergents or emulsifiers be used in bilge water.

By following this best practice for emptying bilge pumps, we can all work together to help minimise water pollution for a cleaner and healthier environment.

For further information go to:
www.thegreenblue.org.uk

How to prevent bilge contamination

- Check the bilge is free from oil before pumping.
- Install an in-line bilge filter to remove oil when pumping out bilge water.
- Portable fuel tanks and spare fuel containers should be filled away from the water's edge (at least 10 metres) and never overfilled, allowing room for the fuel to expand.
- They must be clearly marked with the type of fuel and sited and secured safely on the vessel.
- Use a large enough funnel if you must refuel onboard.
- Use an absorbent sock to control oil and fuel in the bilge and always keep a stock of absorbent materials on the boat.
- Maintain fuel lines, connections and seals to avoid leaks.
- Inboard engines must have either a drip tray under the engine and gearbox, to prevent contamination of the bilge, or oil-tight structural members at the front and rear of the engine.
- This area should be maintained in a clean and dry condition and there should be no fixed bilge pump drawing from within it.
- Remember that oily or fuel-soaked materials are considered hazardous waste so dispose of them in appropriate facilities.

If you see an environmental incident, please contact the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60 to let them know. This service is available 24/7.