

Boat Cleaning and Greywater

What is Greywater?

Greywater is the soapy water from boat galley sinks and showers, which is usually discharged overboard without treatment. The term is also used to describe the dirty rinse water created when washing a boat. The bleaches, detergents, and soaps used aboard may be the same as those you use at home. However, some boat cleaning products are even more caustic or corrosive than household cleaners. Liquid soaps and deck cleaners can contain a variety of toxins, including chlorine, inorganic salts, and metals. Greywater is often rich in phosphates, which pollute the water and encourage the growth of unwanted algae.



Typical boat galley waste drains directly to sea

Many boat cleaning and maintenance products contain chemicals that are poisonous, corrosive, flammable and/or chemically reactive. When you purchase boat-cleaning products, take time to read the label. A signal word, such as "danger/poison," "warning," or "caution" can give you a general indication of the toxicity of a product. If you want more information on a product's contents, ask your retailer or contact the manufacturer for the "Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)." The MSDS will list any constituents considered to be hazardous substances.

Even though household and boat cleaning products may be similar, the environmental impact of boat-generated greywater is worse for one simple reason... home-generated shower, laundry, and dish water is diverted to the sanitary sewer system for treatment prior to being released into local waterways (unless you have a septic system). Boat-generated greywater is not! Most boats do not have the technology required for containing greywater in order to prevent its discharge. So, to minimize the impact of greywater on the marine environment, follow these Clean & Green Solutions:

Clean & Green Solutions:

- **Use shore-side facilities whenever possible...** If you're just out for a day trip, bring home any dirty dishes and take your shower at home to minimize the amount of greywater generated.
- **Less is more...** When washing the boat, use less product and more elbow grease. A quick freshwater rinse and scrub after each trip minimizes the need for harsh cleaners. When using cleaning products, use the smallest amount possible to get the job done.
- **Use only phosphate-free and biodegradable soaps...** Check the shelves of your local supermarket or marine supply store for alternative soaps. These products are no longer hard to find.