



Maryland Department of the
Environment

FACTS ABOUT: Healthy Beach Guidelines for Boaters

MARINE SANITATION CONTROL MEASURES

Sewage from boats is a source of pollution that can degrade coastal water quality leading to the closure of beaches or shellfish beds. The key to controlling boat sewage is proper maintenance and use of onboard toilets and proper disposal of waste.

It is illegal to discharge raw sewage from a vessel anywhere in Maryland waters. If a vessel has an installed toilet, it must be equipped with an operable marine sanitation device (MSD). Vessels 65 feet and under must have a Type I, II or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must have a Type II or III MSD. All Type I and II MSDs (that treat and discharge sewage) must have a certification label affixed by the manufacturer.

Vessels with Type I and II MSDs can legally discharge waste into coastal waters unless the waters are designated as a **No Discharge Zone**. Discharge of untreated sewage is only permitted in ocean waters more than 3 miles from shore. Portable toilets should never be emptied overboard. They should be emptied at shoreside dump stations. Holding tanks should be pumped out at shoreside pumpout stations.

Although a "Y" valve is permitted, when operating in Maryland waters it must be secured to prevent the discharge of raw sewage. The use of a non-reusable wire tie, or padlock, or removing the valve handle are acceptable ways to secure the "Y" valve. To help reduce the impacts of vessel generated sewage:

- **Never** discharge raw sewage into the water; use appropriate shoreside disposal facilities.
- **Never** empty portable toilets overboard. Overboard dumping of potentially infected feces could cause illness and/or closure of beaches or shellfish waters.
- **Never** discharge in a No Discharge Zone
- Avoid discharging in shallow estuarine waters, since they are poorly flushed by tides and/or currents.
- When at the dock, use restrooms rather than your MSD.



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- Pumpout facilities for sewage disposal may be found at many marinas and boat docking facilities. For information about the location of facilities in Maryland call the Department of Natural Resources at 410-260-8770 or visit their web site at www.dnr.state.md.us.



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