

## What is Graywater?

Graywater is wastewater from the galley drains, dishwasher, laundry, sinks, and showers onboard a vessel. Graywater is different than raw sewage. Sewage is liquid or solid waste from toilets.

### State Water Quality Standard

Recreational vessel operators must follow the Washington state law requirements for disposal of graywater while in Washington waters. Graywater discharges are regulated under the Clean Water Act (CWA), Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 90.48.080, and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-201A.

### General requirements for vessel operators

1. Minimize the discharge of graywater while nearshore, in shallow water, or in a bay.
2. Minimize the production of graywater nearshore, in shallow water, or in a bay.
3. Reduce the impact of graywater:
  - Don't drain cooking or kitchen oils to your graywater system.
  - No oil should be discharged in quantities that violate water quality standards or cause a visible sheen, film, sludge, or emulsion on the water, in the water, or on the shoreline.
  - Scrape and wipe food and oil residue from dishes as much as possible before placing in wash or rinse water that will be discharged with graywater.
  - Use only phosphate free and non-toxic soaps and detergents.
4. For disposal of sewage, use sewage pumpouts, portable toilet dump stations, or mobile pumpout services.

We highly recommend you use pumpout stations to dispose of graywater and sewage and not discharge overboard. A list of pumpout stations can be found at the State Parks website: [www.parks.wa.gov/boating/pumpout/](http://www.parks.wa.gov/boating/pumpout/).

If you do not have access to a pumpout station, we strongly encourage you to move farther than 1 nautical mile from shore (or as far as is safe for your vessel up to 1 nautical mile) before discharging your graywater overboard.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Untreated graywater can contain oil and high levels of bacteria and nutrients that threaten the health of our waters. Graywater discharges threaten public health and the public's right to use and enjoy state waters.

### Contact information

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Water Quality Program  
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Fax: 360-407-6426

Environmental Protection  
Agency - Region 10  
1200 6th Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101-1128  
Phone: 206-553-1200  
800-424-4EPA

### Special accommodations

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6600.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

## Additional sewage disposal requirements

In addition to the general requirements, there are additional requirements for sewage disposal.

1. If you must discharge sewage, regulations only allow discharges from Type I or Type II Marine Sanitation Devices (MSD) (described below). Ecology strongly advises that discharges from Type I and II devices occur while the vessel is underway and that boaters avoid discharges while in port. Marina operators may have rules that prohibit discharge from Type I and II devices as a condition of a moorage lease. It is illegal to discharge at any time from Type III MSD.
2. **Discharge of untreated sewage is illegal in Washington waters.** It is only allowed if you are three or more nautical miles off Washington’s outer Pacific coast.
3. Boats with an onboard toilet are required to have a U.S. Coast Guard certified MSD, preferably a Type III holding tank (see table below).
4. Bring portable toilets ashore for proper waste disposal.
5. Use onshore restroom facilities when at dock.
6. Ecology recommends vessels do not discharge sewage within one NM of shellfish beds or shellfish harvesting operations. Sewage could contaminate the shellfish and pose a public health hazard.

### Types of Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs) and Treatment Systems

Type I	Type II	Type III
Treats sewage before discharge by chopping or macerating. May add disinfectant chemicals. Disintegrates solids before discharging into water.	Provides higher level of treatment than Type I. Treats sewage by biological means before discharging. Separates solids for incineration or pumpout.	Does not allow the discharge of sewage. Includes re-circulating, incinerating MSDs and holding tanks.
Discharge must meet certain health standards for bacteria content; must not show any visible floating solids.	Effluent is cleaner than Type I, but contains greater level of chemicals.	Holding tanks are the most common kind of Type III MSD used on recreational boats. Waste is stored until it can be pumped out to a reception facility.
Only allowed on vessels smaller than 65 feet in length	Usually requires more space and power than Type I.	Holding tank waste is not treated even if odor-reducing chemicals are added.
Phased out on Jan 31, 1980. Only allowed if MSD was installed on vessel before Jan 31, 1980, unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vessel was built before Jan. 30, 1975, and then the MSD had to be installed by Jan 30, 1978.</li> </ul>	The typical flow-through device found on most vessels today	Allows for “Y-valve” to discharge directly overboard while outside the three nautical mile limit along Washington's outer coast.

## Pollution regulations and what to watch for if discharging graywater

State law forbids discharges which cause pollution. This includes creating an oil sheen, film, sludge, or foam from a graywater or sewage discharge. Bacteria and nutrients, such as phosphorus or nitrogen, in a discharge could also cause noncompliance with state water quality standards.

WAC 173-201A-260 is the overall state standard for marine and fresh water quality. Discharges of graywater or sewage must not adversely affect characteristic water uses, the most sensitive marine life dependent upon those waters, or public health. Discharges must not be offensive to sight, smell, touch, or taste; and must meet be controlled to meet applicable state water quality standards in the receiving waterbody or any other waterbody impacted by the discharge.

Additional information is available at [www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/index.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/index.html) :

- WAC 173-201A-200 - criteria for fresh waters
- WAC 173-201A-210 - criteria for marine waters
- WAC 173-201A-230 - criteria for lakes

## Reporting violations

If your discharge creates an oily sheen or sludge to form, you must contact:

- Washington Emergency Management at (800) 258-5990 or (800) OILS-911,  
**AND**
- U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center at (800) 424-8802.

## Clean, Green Boating information

Ecology's Clean, Green Boating website encourages boat owners and operators to be good stewards of our environment. Boat owners and operators play an important role in protecting our water quality, especially during maintenance and repairs, while on the water and in port. Information about Clean, Green Boating can be found at: [www.ecy.wa.gov/cleangreenboating](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/cleangreenboating)