

PETROLEUM CONTROL

Applicability

This section applies to marina operators and individual boat owners.

Background

Recreational boating fuel and oil spills are often the result of careless fueling practices or from fuel and oil discharged from bilges. It is not uncommon to see a small fuel sheen on the water surface near docked boats. Not only are these fuel spills unsightly and unpleasant smelling, they can pose serious harm to the aquatic environment.



Marina operators and boaters can prevent damage to the aquatic environment by using pollution prevention best management practices that prevent fuel and oil spills.

As the petroleum sheen spreads across the surface of the water, it creates a barrier to oxygen movement across the water and to surface dwelling animals. As it slowly sinks to the bottom, it clogs plant pores and decreases their ability to uptake oxygen. As the oil settles to the floor, bottom feeders ingest the oil, disrupting their reproduction and growth.

Existing Federal and State Laws

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources regulates the disposal of waste near lakes and prohibits the disposing of contaminants or waste within 15 feet of a lake or in a floodway. It is illegal to discharge waste, oil, trash or other toxic substances into Indiana state waters under IC 14-15-2-8.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Division of Fire and Building Safety regulates marine fueling facilities under Chapter 22 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code and more specifically, Section 2210 (675 IAC 22-2.4). They address construction of facilities, storage and handling of associated liquids, dispensing of fuels, fire prevention and protection methods, and venting of tanks.

Best Management Practices

Marinas and recreational boaters can implement the best management practices on page 60 to prevent or reduce the amount of petroleum products entering the aquatic environment.

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- Promote the installation of fuel/air separators on inboard fuel tank air vents. This will help reduce the amount of fuel spilled into surface waters while fueling. These separators are available commercially and are typically easy to install.
- Avoid overfilling fuel tanks. Remember fuel expands in warm weather. Encourage boaters to fuel up prior to going out. If they must refuel upon their return, suggest that they only fill the tank 90 percent to allow for vapor expansion. Never leave the boat unattended while fueling and listen for a sound change as the tank gets close to full.
- Provide fuel absorbing pads or rings at the fuel dock. Have pre-cut pads or doughnuts that fit the nozzle and encourage boaters to use them. Their use will reduce splashback and drips from entering the water.



Use absorbent bilge pads to soak up oil and fuel and properly recycle or dispose of them.



The use of a bilge sock would help prevent oil collected in the bottom of this bilge from being discharged to the lake (Photo by Joe Exl, IDNR).

- Encourage boaters to routinely check for engine fuel leaks. Teach them how to check fuel lines for signs of wear. Promote the use of drip pans under engines.
- Prohibit the use of detergents on fuel docks to dissipate fuel spills.
- Keep engines properly maintained.
- Prohibit the filling of portable containers on the fuel dock as well as the fueling of boats in the water using portable containers.
- Immediately report oil and fuel spills to the marina office and the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center at (800) 424-8802.
- Request that boaters avoid pumping bilge water that has an oily sheen. Use bilge socks to collect floating oil and fuel in the bilge. Offer recycling/disposal options for the used absorbents.