



# TOILET- WATER

*Collect it!*



Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat



# Discharge prohibition from pleasure craft as of 2009

The Netherlands is a wonderful country for water recreation. There's plenty of water to enjoy the space, peace and quiet, and wonderful nature. Clean surface water in which you can enjoy yourself safely is an important aspect of this enjoyment. After all, there are few better things than a refreshing dip in the water on a hot, sunny day.

Although surface water is now a lot cleaner than it was a few decades ago, we still have a lot of work ahead of us to keep our recreational waters healthy for the future. The largest, impure deposits from industry and cities are a thing of the past. That's why it is important that we now put an end to the many smaller discharges. As water sports recreationist you can contribute to improving the water quality. For example by no longer discharging your toilet water. When it comes down to it, it's in your interests too, as we're talking about your own water for boating and swimming.

## **Discharge prohibition. Why?**

Each year, tens of thousands of people get ill in the Netherlands as a result of swimming in surface water that has been contaminated by bacteria. Often they are plagued by stomach and intestinal problems, although afflictions to air passages and ears can also occur. Children are especially susceptible as they take in a relatively large amount of water.

These problems are in part caused by the 150,000 pleasure craft with on-board toilets. The majority of users still flush the toilet water directly into the surface water. A logical consequence is that the bacteriological water quality at mooring and anchor spots deteriorates when there are several boats there. Measurements show that the standard for safe swimming water according to the new EU Swimming Water Guideline



is often more than exceeded. The Dutch government therefore has to ensure that the Netherlands also meets European legislation. The most important reason, however, is that it is simply extremely unpleasant and fellow water sports enthusiasts can fall ill as a result.

## **Legislation**

In addition to the Swimming Water Guideline, the European Enabling Legislative Guideline for Water dictates that the Dutch government has to ensure good water environments. This means that in the coming years small deposits of sewer water

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in particular have to be stopped. The fact that ships may still deposit their toilet water is due to the fact that there was no effective system for collecting it. In recent years, however, over three hundred extraction pump systems for wastewater have been installed for pleasure craft. They are properly distributed across the Dutch waters and their numbers are still growing. In 2009, when the discharge prohibition comes into effect, there will be an additional legal obligation for all marinas with more than fifty cabin boats to have an extraction pump system. A collection system for toilet- or household water is being developed for other types of vessels also, such as charter shipping, so that a discharge ban can also be introduced for this sector in time.

In short: we are addressing the health of swimmers and surfers, a sustainable quality of the water environment and the obligation to meet European legislation. Now that there are enough extraction pump stations and water sports enthusiasts are being given enough time since the publication of the discharge prohibition to adapt their pleasure craft accordingly, administrations, environmental and water sports organisations support the prohibition of discharging toilet water as of January 2009.

## For all pleasure craft

The discharge prohibition will apply to all new and existing Dutch and foreign pleasure craft as described in the Dutch Pleasure Craft Act (Wet Pleziervaartuigen). Only special groups such as historic ships will be exempt from the Toilet Water Discharge Prohibition.

## Alternatives to underwater toilets

An alternative to pumping toilet water

overboard is a wastewater tank and emptying this tank at an extraction station in a marina. Please note: installing such a tank is not going to be obligatory – there will simply be a prohibition on discharging toilet water. Of course you can also use the toilet facilities on land or another type of toilet on board, such as a vacuum, a mobile (chemical) or dry toilet. In the end, the amount of space available on board, the deposit frequency of collected toilet water, the preferred levels of comfort and costs will determine the choice. Wastewater tanks for electrical or mechanical flush toilets take up more space, for example, than vacuum and mobile toilets. In addition, mobile and dry toilets are far less expensive than a wastewater tank. Careful consideration is therefore very important in this regard.

## Getting rid of wastewater

You can have the wastewater tank emptied at one of the three hundred extraction pump stations, generally found in the larger marinas. This number will certainly increase in the coming period. Moreover, the extraction of toilet water is free of charge if you spend the night in the same marina. Emptying a mobile (chemical) toilet



is possible in almost all marinas that are linked to the sewer system. The residue of the dry toilet can be left in marinas as common household garbage.

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## No prohibition for discharging grey water

You may continue to discharge the 'grey' wastewater from sinks, washing areas or showers as this causes less contamination than toilet water and does not cause a bacteriological contamination. It is also technically far more complicated to store household wastewater on board of existing craft as this would call for a far larger wastewater tank. This does not detract from the fact that you should continue to discharge wastewater full of soap remains sparingly as many of the water organisms are sensitive to this water.

## What can you do?

Those who believe that the contamination caused by their vessel is limited in scope are wrong. A single discharge of toilet water in a large area of surface water may indeed not have a noticeable effect on the water quality. But there are over 150,000 sailing and motor vessels with an underwater toilet on the Dutch waters. This all adds up and many minor deposits combine to create large deposits. This is especially true at busy mooring and anchor spots on beautiful sunny days. The refreshing dip in the water is a lot less refreshing if you realise that you are swimming in your neighbour's diluted toilet water. It is unpleasant, it stinks and it can make you ill.

It really shouldn't be more than normal that, as water recreationist, you collect your own mess. If you teach your children at home to wash their hands after going to the toilet they will do the same on board. And then, if the weather's good, they'll go for a swim....

How can you, as boat owner, reduce the health risks? Start

by limiting toilet water deposits already, especially in waters where there is a lot of swimming or surfing. You could use the toilet facilities on shore or collect the toilet water in a wastewater tank or mobile (chemical) toilet and empty it at the extraction points in marinas. You will then pre-empt the discharge prohibition that will be in force for pleasure craft as of 2009. Don't wait until the winter 2008/2009 to adapt your boat. Get it done as soon as possible.



## You can also ask for the following folders (in Dutch):

- Environmental care. That's how it works!
- Wastewater collection. That's how it works!
- Recreational waters. Look after them!

You can download these free at charge at [www.vuilwater.info](http://www.vuilwater.info) or order them at the Watersportverbond (Water Sports Association). On this site more information about the Toilet Water Discharge Prohibition is available.

