What Are the Pump-Out Requirements?

TCEQ rules (30 TAC 321.5) require that boat pump-out stations be designed, installed, and operated to prevent the accidental discharge of sewage.

PUMP-OUT STATIONS MUST:

- Have a spill-proof connection with shipboard holding tanks.
- Have suction controls or vacuum breakers to limit suction to levels that prevent the collapse of ridge holding tanks.
- Provide freshwater facilities for tank flushing.
- Have a check valve and positive cut-off or other device to preclude spillage when breaking connection with a vessel being serviced.
- Provide adequate interim storage, if required, prior to transfer to an approved sewage system for disposal.
- Ensure that any connection to a drinking water system has vacuum breakers or another device designed to ensure against backflow or siphonage of sewage or contaminated water into the drinking water system.

Mobile or floating boat pump-out stations must have adequate and spill-proof facilities for transfer to shore-based sewage systems or intermediate transfer facilities.

CERTIFICATION FEES

BOATS
New and Renewal – $15

PUMP-OUT STATIONS
New – $35 | Renewal – $25

Certification decals expire Dec. 31 of every odd-numbered year.

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO GET CERTIFIED.

CONTACT US

WEB tceq.texas.gov/goto/boat
PHONE 512-239-BOAT (2628)
EMAIL cwcert@tceq.texas.gov

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TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

CLEAN WATER CERTIFICATION

For Boat Marine Sanitation Devices and Pump-Out Stations

WEB tceq.texas.gov/goto/boat
PHONE 512-239-BOAT (2628)

PUMP IT DON'T DUMP IT

What is the Clean Water Certification Program?

The CWCP's goal is to prevent boat sewage discharge into Texas waterways. This program aims to help protect and improve water quality as required under Texas law. Texas waterways include all inland freshwater lakes, rivers, tidally influenced waterbodies, and coastal areas out to three nautical miles into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Clean Water Certification Program requires owners of boats with marine sanitation devices (MSDs) and owners of pump-out stations to obtain a self-certifying decal that the MSD or pump-out station works properly to prevent sewage discharge into Texas waterways. An MSD is any permanently installed sanitation device on any boat that is designed to receive, retain, treat, or dispose of sewage.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR BOATS?

TCEQ rules require owners of boats with permanently installed MSDs (toilets) to certify their boats with the Clean Water Certification Program. Under the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code §31.129(a), violators face a Class C misdemeanor charge and fines up to $500. Boats regulated under 30 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 321, Subchapter A must:

- be equipped with an MSD (30 TAC 321.3),
- certify the MSD with TCEQ (30 TAC 321.5), and
- display evidence of certification when operating on any state water body (30 TAC 321.6).

WHAT DOES STATE LAW SAY ABOUT BOAT SEWAGE?

It is illegal to discharge untreated sewage anywhere in Texas waterways. Federal and state laws prohibit the discharge of both treated and untreated sewage into any no discharge zone (NDZ). An NDZ is an area of a water body or an entire water body where boaters are completely prohibited from discharging treated and untreated sewage. All inland freshwater lakes and rivers are NDZs. Clear Lake is currently the only coastal NDZ in Texas.

HOW SHOULD I MANAGE BOAT SEWAGE?

All boats with an installed toilet must have one of three types of approved MSDs. Type I and II MSDs are flow-through systems that treat the sewage using chemical and mechanical methods before discharging the waste overboard. A Type III MSD is a holding tank.

WHY IS BOAT SEWAGE A PROBLEM?

Most Texas waterways are either a source for public drinking water or used for contact recreation, such as swimming. When boat owners discharge sewage directly into these waters, it can impact both human health and the environment.

HEALTH RISKS

Boat sewage can introduce disease-causing microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, and protozoans) into the water. These microorganisms are vectors for diseases such as hepatitis A, gastroenteritis, giardia, cryptosporidium, typhoid, and cholera.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Boat sewage contains nutrients, such as nitrogen, that aquatic plants and algae can use to grow and spread in the form of blooms. These blooms can block the light needed by other aquatic life, creating an imbalance in the ecosystem. When the algae decays, it can deplete the water body of oxygen needed by aquatic organisms, resulting in fish kills. Along the coast, shellfish beds can be affected by bacteria entering the water from boat sewage. The bacteria also consume oxygen that can deplete oxygen levels needed by aquatic organisms.

Some chemicals used in MSDs to treat boat sewage, such as formaldehyde and chlorine, can be toxic to aquatic life.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

When contaminant levels (bacteria, nutrients, etc.) are high, many swimming and fishing areas must be closed or restricted. This can affect tourism and the ability to enjoy contact recreation on Texas waterways.