



Oily Bilge Water

I've Got It---Now What Do I Do?

Oily bilge water is an ugly fact of life if you work on the water. It happens---fuel and lube oils are all over the place on a boat. Since it's against the laws of nature and man and the EPA and USCG you'd better deal with it correctly.

FACT: It's against the law to put more than 15 PPM (parts per million) of oil into the water. Big fines and bigger penalties await the polluters.

So what's the best way to deal with the oily water? There are just a few legal solutions to the disposal problem? Here's a run down with some projected cost ranges of disposal methods that you can actually use on-board the vessel.

#1 Pump it off to a VERY much insured and VERY responsible 3rd party to properly dispose of it on shore. You'd best be very sure about what they are doing with it, because if they dump it or spill it or anything else.....YOU STILL OWN IT. Cradle to grave it's yours .
COSTS: Generally \$1-\$3 per gallon

#2. Evaporate the water portion away-----this is a great solution because the evaporator is the GRAVE. The oil stays behind and you've gotten rid of the huge portion-that is water. Water vapor is harmless.

Be aware it takes a lot of power to evaporate water away. It takes 2.6 KW of power to evaporate 1 gallon of water with an electric powered evaporator and you have no emissions to report or worry about. But you do have ongoing energy costs. COSTS: [Small electric evaporators \(5 gph\)](#) cost \$6K plus, and you have to pay for the power to run them. These usually go on new builds or boats that have lots of excess power.

You can use [oil or propane fired evaporators](#) on shore---but now you've created another waste stream...emissions. Permits are needed if you go with gas or oil fired evaporators on shore.. \$8K to \$40 K should handle it.



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#3 Use bilge filters—these are specialized filter materials that will absorb oil and let the water get pumped overboard---without the oil in it, but it's not fool proof. Problem here is-----the filters get full of oil and have to be changed out. How often? Depends on how much oil you have in your water.--and now you've got another waste stream to deal with: the oil plus the filter media too. **COSTS:** \$1200. and up. This can work well if you don't have a lot of oil in your water and don't have to change filters too often, but it's not fail safe and we all know stuff and accidents can and do happen. We can equip our [OOPS bilge filter](#) with an oil content monitor but that drives the cost up by \$5K.

#4 Use an oily water separator (OWS): The oily water separators are the holy grail of bilge water treatment. Boats above a certain size and weight are mandated to have one on board, and the regulations are filtering down now to the smaller boats. New and tighter regulations and controls are coming to the waters near you.

An OWS is a mechanical device that uses the difference in gravity between oil and water to separate them from one another. These can be USCG approved and certified to meet all the latest/greatest Int'l regulations governing oily water discharge (IMO/MEPC 107(49) a very strict set of rules covering handling and disposal of oily water.

An oily water separator has an oil content monitor on it that samples every discharge and logs it. The oil content monitor will not let you discharge over limits oil (15 PPM). These OWS units need to be re- certified every 5 years. **COSTS:** depends on flow rate, [small ones](#) starts off at \$7K (1 GPM) and we can go all the way to 45 GPM. Let's talk about this one.

So what's the best way to handle oily bilge water? Depends. We have every technology known to man for separating, skimming and otherwise treating oily water for re-use or disposal. We can help. We've been doing this for over 25 years. Give us a call—we can go over the methods that will work best for you.