

Vessel Maintenance

Products used to wash boat hulls and decks often contain toxic ingredients that are harmful to the marine environment. Degreasers dry the natural oils that fish need for their gills to take in oxygen. Underwater hull cleaning can leave toxic paint residues in harbor sediments.

- Limit in-water maintenance and perform cleaning where debris can be captured and disposed of properly. Marina tenants should check whether or not their marina has established guidelines for the type of boat maintenance work that can be done in the slip.
- Purchase greener alternatives that are water-based, biodegradable, phosphate-free, and/or less toxic (better if more than one green attributes are claimed). Seek safer alternatives at www.goodguide.com or look for approved alternatives by EcoLabels such as Green Seal, Ecologo, or the US EPA Design for the Environment (DfE).
- Do not sand in heavy wind. Sand with vacuum sanders, which automatically collect and store paint, varnish, or wood dust before it can get into the marine environment (or eyes or lungs). Some boat yards have these tools for rent.
- Avoid products with phosphates, ammonia, lye, sodium hypochlorite (bleach), chlorinated hydrocarbons (methylene chloride, perchloroethylene, or trichloroethylene), and petroleum distillates.
- Keep absorbents or rags within reach to wipe up spills.
- Suspend a tarp or polyethylene sheet between the boat and the dock to catch any spills, dust, or debris that would otherwise end up in the water.
- Consider alternative, non-biocide hull coatings that contain no tributyltin, heavy metals such as copper and zinc or biocides. Clean the bottom with a soft, non-abrasive sponge. Use hull cleaning companies who use green management practices such as monitoring their divers and using nonabrasive scrubbing agents. For more information: ucanr.org/sites/coast/ and www.portofsandiego.org/environment/alternative-hull-paints.html

Painting and Varnishing

- Limit the amount of open solvents or paints on the dock to one gallon or less.
- Always mix paints or epoxy over a tarp.
- Always use a drip pan or drop cloth.

Toxic Product Alternative

Detergent and Soap - Use fresh water and a lot of elbow grease

Bleach - Try hydrogen peroxide

Scouring Powders - Use baking soda or salt

Floor Cleaner Mix - 1 cup white vinegar in 2 gallons water

Window Cleaner Mix - 1 cup vinegar in 1-quart warm water

Varnish Cleaner Mix - ½ cup vinegar and ½ cup water

Head Cleaner - Brush with baking soda

Shower Cleaner - Wet surface and use scouring cloth with baking soda

Aluminum Cleaner - Mix 2 tablespoons cream of tartar in 1 quart of water

Chrome Cleaner/Polish - Clean with apple cider vinegar, polish with baby oil

Fiberglass Stain Remover - Make a baking soda paste

Drain Opener - Disassemble and replace; avoid toxic products

Mildew Remover - Make paste of equal parts lemon juice and salt

Wood Polish - Mix 3 parts olive oil and 1-part white vinegar, or use almond or olive oil (interior unvarnished wood only)

