



Topping up our tanks and taking care of our engines

It's incredible to think that only 5% of oil and fuel in our waters actually comes from the catastrophic oil spills that make the headlines. Whilst the gigantic spill events are truly devastating for our waters and marine life, the majority of fuel and oil pollution are caused by us sailors and seafarers – whether accidental or through carelessness in our marinas, ports and harbours.

Studies show that 95% of all oil and fuel pollution in the water comes from our everyday re-fuelling, engine emissions and oil leaks - us topping up our boats or badly maintaining our engines.

Topping up fuel is one of the most common ways we sailors unintentionally pollute the environment. With tens of thousands of boats around the world being refilled every day, it's perhaps no surprise that our collective impact equates to hundreds of gallons of fuel polluting our waterways and oceans.

Oil doesn't mix with water and when spilled can critically affect species living on, near or below the surface, and can persist in the environment for months or even years. It's therefore incredibly important that we re-fuel with care, making sure we don't spill a drop. It's also important we maintain a healthy engine - keeping our boats running smoothly and ensuring maximum efficiency and the lowest emissions possible comes about by regular engine checks and services.

Make sure there are no leaks, that the engine is properly oiled and watered, and that any wasted or unused fuel is stored and disposed of correctly and in accordance with the law. Fuel and oil are hazardous waste, so make sure to use these bins for any fuel/oil stained materials.

For more tips on clean sailing, head to www.cleansailors.com

When topping-up:

1. Reduce the possibility of unforeseen movements when topping up. Tie up to the fuel berth / pontoon securely and even get the crew onto the pontoon for a leg-stretch!
2. Fill small portable cans on-shore to avoiding any rocking or surprise boat movements
3. Keep a fuel funnel onboard and use when topping up to make sure all incoming fuel ends up in the tank
4. Clean up any spills ASAP and avoid the Fairy Liquid trick, at all costs! Whatever you do, avoid using any washing up liquids or detergents to disperse oil in water. Whilst the oil 'disappears', it actually makes the pollution issue worse by sinking oil particles into the body of water, making it more easily absorbed by marine life and living tissues.
5. Absorbent fuel socks are really useful to have onboard, in case of spills on your deck, pontoon or in the water. Fuel socks look like fabric sausages which soak up fuel from a surface, including from surface water. The socks can then be disposed of properly, on-land.
6. Keep an eye on your tank – unlike overfilling our water tanks slightly, overfilling our fuel tank can be incredibly damaging (and expensive!). Products like Fuel Whistles can be easily inserted into tanks to sing when the tank is approaching capacity – much like a tea pot reaching the boil!

