

# Garbage Disposal Laws

## Federal Regulations Prohibit Disposal of Plastics & Garbage by Boaters

### Overview

The United States has robust laws regulating the disposal from boats of garbage and plastics—it is illegal to put any garbage into the water from a vessel that is on a lake, river, stream, or any coastal waters up to 3 miles offshore. In the Great Lakes, this no garbage law applies everywhere. The International Treaty to Prevent Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), of which the U.S. is signatory and which consequently has the force of law, was created to address the plastic pollution problem. It prohibits the dumping of any plastic into the water anywhere, and restricts the dumping of other forms of garbage within specified distances from shore. Violators of any of the regulations issued to implement Annex V are liable for a civil penalty of up to \$25,000 for each violation, and criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 5 years.

### Do States have their own Garbage Disposal Laws?

Yes. States have implemented their own laws to regulate the disposal of plastics and other garbage from recreational boats. Most state laws are very similar and prohibit dumping of any garbage into the navigable waters of the state, including inland navigable waters and up to 3 miles from shore; the loading of garbage on a vessel with the intent to dump it into the navigable waters of the state or in waters up to 20 miles from shore; any person in charge of a vessel from permitting it to be loaded with garbage with the intent to dump it into navigable waters or in waters up to 20 miles from shore.

### Am I Required to Display a Garbage Placard?

All boats 26 feet and over in length must display, in a prominent place where the crew and passengers can read it, an informational, Save Our Seas placard on the subject of these prohibitions. The placard must be at

least 9 inches wide by 4 inches high and made of durable material bearing letters at least one-eighth of an inch high. The placards can be purchased at marine supply dealers, or may be requested free of charge from many state environmental departments.

### Do I need a Waste Management Plan?

Although it's a good idea for all boaters to have a trash plan, only vessels 40 feet

and over which operate beyond 3 nautical miles from shore must prepare and carry a written waste management plan describing procedures for collecting, processing, storing and properly disposing of garbage in a way that will not violate the MARPOL requirements. It must also designate the person responsible for carrying out the plan. These vessels must also prominently display the informational placard mentioned above.

