



Leave No Trace

Dealing With Trash At Sea

An Ocean-Friendly Approach For Cruising and Racing Sailors

The CCA is committed to stewardship of the oceans. One of several serious threats to our oceans is the amount of marine debris - trash and plastic in particular - which can now be found in all oceans in even the remotest places on earth. To help minimize the likelihood that sailors do not contribute to this problem, the Environment of the Sea Committee recommends that its members and the sailing community generally, whether cruisers or racers, adopt a leave-no-trace approach to dealing with trash by undertaking to carry out everything which is brought aboard, with the exception of biodegradable garbage, which may be discarded overboard an appropriate distance from shore, which under the Marpol Treaty is 12 miles. Everything else should be double-bagged in plastic trash bags, stowed aboard for the duration of a passage and, once ashore, disposed of or recycled according to local regulations or practice.

Following this practice is not difficult. It does require planning, particularly on smaller boats with limited storage space, but the Committee believes that it is a goal which should be achievable on all boats without undue burden. To assist in planning a leave-no-trace passage, the following are some suggestions which might be helpful. Many of them are no doubt already in use on many boats. Our committee welcomes suggestions for additions to its list.

Purchasing Decisions

1. Purchase foods which minimize the amount or layers of packaging.
2. Plan to minimize or eliminate the use of paper towels, napkins and plates.
3. Don't use plastic knives, forks or spoons or disposable plastic or paper cups.
4. Buy and use as much fresh fruit and vegetable as possible.
5. Where practical, buy food in larger containers and packages rather than purchasing the same quantities in multiple packages.
6. Avoid multiple small containers or of snack foods or drinks which are individually wrapped.
7. Avoid individual containers of pastas, stews or other one-pot dishes meant to be micro-waved and consumed by one person.
8. Minimize or avoid altogether plastic water bottles, especially small bottles intended for individual use. Instead, use reusable bottles and take steps to ensure that water in the boat's tanks is potable. Under no circumstances should plastic bottles be thrown overboard anywhere.

9. Use powdered drink mixes to help minimize the number of aluminum cans and plastic bottles taken aboard.

Actions Before Departure

1. Remove as much of the packaging from packaged foods, including plastic rings holding beverage cans together, as possible.
2. Remove paper labels from canned foods and label cans with an indelible marker
3. Where possible, repack things such as cookies, energy bars, cereals and sweeteners, in sturdy, reusable plastic containers or bags.
4. Cook and freeze dinners at home and store them aboard in reusable plastic bags or containers.

Particular attention should be given to minimizing trash when sailing to island destinations which may have waste disposal challenges not faced by most mainland locations.

A prior iteration of this policy, prepared with the Newport Bermuda Race in mind, and posted on this webpage since 2010, was incorporated into the Racing Rules of the 2012 NBR.