

## ETHANOL ADDED TO MARINE GAS

There have been a few articles written about the inclusion of Ethanol in Marine Gasoline and the very serious problems that will occur if proper maintenance and/or additives are not added to prevent fuel tank problems.

In a nut shell, ethanol absorbs the water that gets into your fuel tank and works much the same way as “dry gas” is used to prevent fuel line freeze-up in automobiles. SUV’s and trucks in the winter. There is little or no problem with the fuel tanks of those vehicles because they are usually emptied and refilled regularly. For this reason, one should no longer keep their vehicle’s gas tank topped off, but instead let it get down to a 1/4 tank or less before refueling.

In vessels, the problem is exacerbated because of their typical use, i.e weekends or intermittent trips. Ethanol absorbs 2 to 3 percent, by volume, of water. If there is more water than that (normally but not always from condensation), the ethanol blended gasoline will go through what is called “phase separation” during periods of “STORAGE”. This can happen when a boat is not in use during the Summer, but particularly over the Late Fall, Winter and early Spring lay-up period. When this separation occurs, the ethanol settles to the bottom of the tank while the gasoline floats on top.

Reducing the amount of water in your boat’s fuel tank is CRITICAL. This is best done by running a can of non-alcohol fuel drier through the system a few times each boating season (a good excuse to burn gas and go somewhere). Then, add the same fuel dryer product when you top off for winter storage and/or when you do not plan plan to use the boat for several weeks or more. Among the non-alcohol products to consider are: Chevron Techron, Sta-Bill Fuel System Dryer, MDR Water Zorb and Starbrite Star Tron.

The outcome of not treating ethanol blended gasoline with a fuel drier as well as a stabilizer is that it can result in fuel tank corrosion in steel tanks and in the case of fiberglass tanks cause dissolving of the polyester resin used in fiberglass construction. Tanks made of aluminum or polypropylene are said to not be affected by ethanol. Replacing fuel tanks is not a pretty sight (cutting a hole in the side of a vessel to get them out) and is, without question, a very expensive ordeal to say the least!

Constant monitoring of fuel tanks and fuel lines is now, more than ever, an extremely prudent practice.

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