Bilge Cleaning

The area where water collects in a boat is known as the bilge.

Cleaning:

The most important reasons to keep your bilge clean are:

1. To prevent the growth of bacteria
2. To prevent rust and corrosion of equipment that lies in the bilge
3. To eliminate foul odors.

Some boats take in more water than others. It is normal for some water to be in the bilge since it can leak in at the stuffing box(es) and rudder posts(s). However, if you find an unusual amount of water make sure that you don't have a leaking through-hull fitting or pipe. If your boat usually has some water in the bilge just add the Bilge Cleaner to the bilge and let the rocking of the boat do the cleaning for you.

Most grease and dirt can be removed with a Bilge Cleaner and perhaps a little elbow grease.

Limber Holes:

Limber holes are found in the ribs or partitions in the bilge which allow water to pass through them and flow to the lowest bilge points usually where the bilge pump is located. This allows the water to be pumped out either automatically or manually.

You should keep these holes clear of residue to prevent blocking the water flow. Most boats will have a light chain running through the limber holes, which allows you to pull it back and forth to dislodge any foreign matter.

Engine Oil:

Most newer model boats have drip pans installed under the engines to prevent oil from dripping directly into the bilge. Whether you have drip pans or not it is a good idea to put absorbent pads under the engines. They not only absorb the oil that could drip but provide a quick way to find leaks. Each time you do an engine check, which should be each time prior to starting, check the pad to see if any new oil spots have appeared. If so, try to track down the source immediately.

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What to look for:

You should inspect the bilge and its surroundings with a flashlight at least once a month. Look for the following:

1. Lift up the float switch on your electric bilge pump to make sure it turns on the pump automatically.
2. If you find unusual amounts of water, be sure to track down the source.
3. Check all through-hull openings and fittings.
4. Make sure that all fittings below the waterline have double hose clamps.
5. Check the seacocks to make sure that you can turn them off. You could sink your boat is a hose comes loose from a seacock and you can't stop the flow of water because the valve is corroded.
6. Look for corrosion and rust.
7. Check for unusual growth or mildew.
8. Check all pipes, hoses, and clamps.
9. Check limber holes.