

Water Terminology

The following are terms used to describe water in the marine industry.

Fresh Water – Water that contains little or no salt. Fresh water lakes, rivers, streams, wells, rain water, reservoirs, etc. One cubic foot of fresh water weighs 62.425 pounds.

Salt Water – Sea water. Usually 64 pounds per cubic foot but the density can vary with temperature and geographical area.

Raw Water – The water taken from the sea, river or lake the vessel is operating on. The water could be used for cooling, toilet flushing or ballast and could be salt, fresh or brackish.

Brackish Water – Water that is a mix of fresh and salt, usually where rivers empty into bays or where rivers are tidally influenced and sea water and fresh river water meet and mix.

Potable Water – Fresh Water that is suitable for drinking and cooking.

Drinking Water – Same as potable water.

Wash Water – Wash water is fresh water that is suitable for washing and bathing but not for drinking. Wash water may come on board as potable water but is held in tanks that are either not prepared and coated for potable water or are skin tanks (tanks that have sea water on one side).

Sanitary Water – Water supply used to flush toilets and/or urinals.

Gray Water – (Grey Water) - Water that comes from the drains of sinks, showers, washing machines and floor drains but not from toilets or sewerage tanks.

Sewerage Water – Water or effluent from toilets and/or sewerage tanks.

Ballast Water – Water used to trim, increase or hold the draft of a vessel. This can be salt, fresh or brackish water.

Battery Water – Battery water is pure water distilled by a boiling and condensing process. Pure water prevents metals and minerals from precipitating out, building up in the bottom of the battery and shorting the plates.

Distilled Water – Same as battery water.

Spring or Bottled Water – Water that comes from some spring, river or reservoir that is safe or suitable to drink. This water contains varying amounts of minerals and is not distilled water.

Jacket Water – Used to cool the cylinders in an engine block (Jacket). Almost always treated with a rust inhibiting chemical or anti-freeze.

H₂O – The chemical symbol for water. It means two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. Do not use H₂O to describe a water pump (H₂O PUMP) or watertight door (H₂O-TIGHT DOOR) it is incorrect and confusing.