



BIMCO offers guidance on reducing single use plastics onboard ship

New BIMCO guidance highlights the cost savings, moral and environmental benefits of curbing the use of water bottles in favour of on-board systems.

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According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), plastics are the largest, most harmful and most persistent fraction of marine litter accounting for [about 85 per cent of total marine waste](#) . Annex V of MARPOL prohibits the discharge of all plastic waste from ships but such waste can reach the ocean if mismanaged on land as most plastic waste reaches the sea from land sources. While recycling is important in combatting waste, it is estimated that less than 10% of plastic waste is actually recycled.

It is without question that many plastic products enhance our lives yet nearly half of all plastic produced globally is designed for single use. Items used for minutes can persist in the environment for hundreds if not thousands of years. Water and drinks bottles made of *polyethylene terephthalate* (PET) are one of the most common single use products. UNEP reports that in 2018 alone, 481.6 billion PET bottles were sold. Not surprisingly plastic drinks bottles and bottle caps are among the most commonly found items of litter in coastal clean-ups around the globe

Developing onboard water supply systems

Following a survey from members in 2021, BIMCO estimated that between 540 million and 1.08 billion PET water bottles are used annually onboard merchant ships.

In its comprehensive publication [The Art and Science of Removing Single-Use Plastic Bottles from Ships](#) BIMCO sets out information for shipowners to enable them to develop strategies and plans for replacing plastic bottles with an on-board water supply system. The Guide highlights the significant cost savings, moral and environmental benefits curbing the use of water bottles in favour of on-board systems. The Guide further describes on-board water supply technologies and details the questions to ask potential suppliers in order to choose the most effective and suitable system.

The Guide also recognizes the importance of seafarers' support and offers guidance on ways to encourage seafarers to trust and consume water produced on board. To educate seafarers and others, BIMCO has included downloadable posters for use onboard. The Guide is freely available to all users whether or not BIMCO members.

Gard was honoured to have assisted in the BIMCO Single-Use Plastics Task Force producing the guidelines and recommends them to our members.