ORANGE COUNTY COASTKEEPER®

Biocide Basics

Paint manufacturers understand that biological growth on boat bottoms can have serious impacts on vessel performance. To prevent buildup, booster biocides are added and aid in the effort to keep boat bottoms clean. Various biocides exist and it is important for boat owners to understand what is going on their boats, and eventually into the water. These biocides have the potential to cause serious harm to the aquatic environment if found at elevated concentrations. The following biocides are commonly used in commercially available antifouling paints.

Biolux Technology: Interlux Paint's slime blocking biocide. Inhibits photosynthesis to prevent slime buildup but will not stop hard-fouling. Often coupled with other biocides or copper compounds to provide more complete antifouling results. Used in multiple Interlux Paint products.

Econea: A metal-free antifouling agent. Effective at controlling a wide range of invertebrate fouling organisms. Has been coupled with other biocides that prevent soft-fouling. Believed to be less harmful to aquatic life than biocides containing metals, but no studies have been undertaken to prove this.

Irgarol: An algaecide that inhibits photosynthesis by blocking electron transport. Effective against the growth of algae and slime but does not prevent animal build up. Most commonly coupled with copper compounds in antifouling paints. Specifically designed for use in marine environments. Harmful to a variety of non-targeted aquatic organisms.

Zinc Pyrithione: An algaecide/fungicide that affects normal algal/fungal activity by disrupting membrane transport. Has many medical applications such as treating dandruff, ringworm, and athlete's foot. Effective against soft-fouling organisms only, so must be coupled with another biocide to prevent hard-fouling. Zinc Omadine is one brand of the biocide commonly used in antifouling paint. Concerns exist about zinc accumulation in sediments and potential water toxicity as the product becomes more widespread.

For more information regarding the Newport Bay Copper Reduction Program, contact Ray Hiemstra at 714-850-1965 or ray@coastkeeper.org.

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