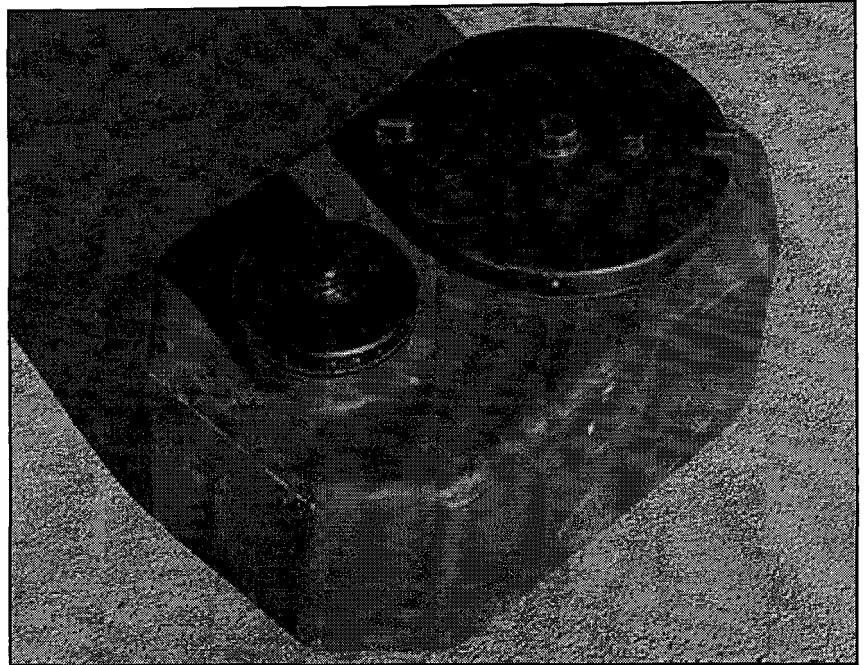


Potty Training

A Graduate Course

Larry Kline



Now that so many people have discovered the wonderlands of our river and lake systems, we are not only loving them to death but leaving more than foot steps. And that is our own solid human waste. Of course our club trips could have a big impact in this arena if we don't all do the right thing. But even when 2 or 3 of us go for a trip we can cause a negative impact as well. It has finally gotten to the point where travel to lands under the management of Federal and state agencies requires everyone to carry and use a portable toilet. And many of us abhor the idea of using the odd little contraptions. I too was one of those. This article will share some of the experiences I had in my conversion - it was NOT a religious experience by any means!

I was first trained to "do my business" (a phrase used by my 8-year-old nephew, Nick) way back at the age of 2. Now I've had to go "back to school" and learn potty training at the graduate level. For those of you who have already graduated from this course you may stop reading here. You others can continue at your own peril!!!

In the sea kayaking circles porta-potties are known as "boom boxes". A nice small one sells for \$60 and includes a seat. For \$35 or so you can get the box without the seat and still do your business. I did the latter. The seat is larger than the boom box (for transport the boom box actually fits inside the seat). This presents an additional stowage problem plus it must be cleaned in-the-field after every use, as well as at the end of the trip. For these

reasons its use is not recommended. The boom box is black plastic and is 8" by 7" by 13". It has 2 access ports - a small 3" one and a larger 6" one. It has no handle - more on this later.

The biggest issue in using the boom box may not be the technical aspect but more so the human aspect. But both need to be mastered -- as you will soon learn!

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(dispose of human waste in a porta potty).

But even when 2 or 3 of us go for a trip we can cause a negative impact as well.

On a recent trip to Lake Powell a buddy and I had several pointed discussions on the human/ethical front. Before the trip we had to decide whether to purchase a boom box. I felt strongly that if we had to bring one to the lake in order to be street legal (i.e. comply with park regulations for disposal of solid human waste), then we were duty bound to USE it. My buddy was adamant that it was foolish to use it. I responded by saying that I would not go on the trip if he did not promise to use it. Why should I buy the thing so that he could freeload on gaining entry to the National Recreation Area on false pretenses? He had all kinds of rationalizations for

not using it. The best one was that all the fish go in the lake so why should he not be allowed to as well. After further discussion with my buddy it became evident that the issue was really his own perspective about solid body wastes. He would easily use a plastic bag to pick up after his dog and himself, but doing his business directly into the boom box and then having to deal with its disposal at the end of the trip seemed to be the crux of the matter. Perhaps it was confounded by the fact that I too would be using the boom box as well.

Now for the funny part - and my buddy still does not yet know this happened to him or me! I set up the boom box and after 2 days the urge to purge came to the fore. I gathered my resolve, took a deep breath and headed over to the box. I dutifully squatted over it, and** MISSED!!! Yea gads*!!!! Why such a problem now when I had done so well with cat-holes for so many years?? Any way, I took out my trusty hand trowel and scooped it up and plopped it into the box. Since the trowel now had a special fragrance to it, I then went down to the shore and washed it off. Adventure completed. Or so I thought. About one hour later I see my buddy wandering over to the boom box area and he proceeds to do his business, but not using the boom box. Then he wanders down to the very spot on the shore where I had washed my trusty trowel and he proceeds to wash his hands!!! It was all I could do to not laugh out loud. So, as my buddy said, it is true, if the fish do it in the lake why can't I ??

In reality, the whole process is very simple. Prepare the box at home by spraying its inside surfaces with PAM (so the contents won't stick) and adding the blue disinfectant liquid or packets sold at Wal-Mart along with 2 liters of water. Then close the lids, strap it onto the back of your kayak with bungee cords (or put it in front of your feet inside the cockpit) and off you paddle. At camp, place the box on a flat piece of secluded real estate and wait.

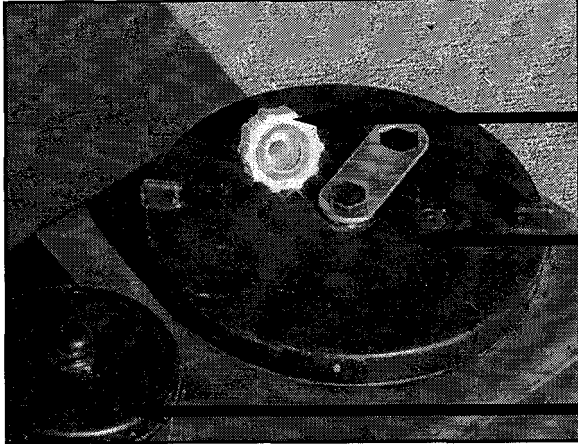
When the time comes to do your business, you squat directly over the larger hole. So as not to miss your target -- park your cheeks on the rim of the hole. Then do your business. Another option some use is to do your business on the ground and then use your trowel to scoop the poop into the boom box. The blue disinfectant provides a pleasant aroma to mask what Mother Nature provides, so you don't have to deal with other people's stuff. Then put the lid back on and screw it tight.

Simply strap it back on your boat to bring it home. After you return to civilization, go to the nearest dump station and empty it. The dump station at Powell was a metal structure, 3-feet in diameter and waist high. It had a foot-pedal operated lid and a nearby high pressure hose. You step on the pedal, the lid opens, you hold the box over the dumpster and spray water into the box until all the contents are washed out. You can easily face the port-holes away from you for visual comfort. This whole process can be a problem for those of us with small hands as the box does not have a handle. At Lake Powell I dropped the box into the dump unit!!! Luckily it was funnel shaped and the box did not go far. Next time I will bring some disposable rubber gloves and hang onto the rim of the small hole while I spray the water into the box to wash out the contents. Then I can strip the gloves off and dispose of them in a nearby wastebasket. (After the trip, Harv, told me that an optional screw fitting on the middle of the large access port lid allows one to attach a garden hose, turn on the water, and let the high pressure water clean and expel the contents out the small port. This should solve the no-handle problem as you can hold the contraption by the hose insert fixture. I don't recall that Lake Powell had a garden hose fitting to work with - it was more like an air-hose for car tires.)

The park rules do not allow the disposal of human waste in plastic bags -- most likely because people would dispose of the bag in the dump station (or worse, the regular trash dumpster) and the plastic would clog up the vacuum system used by park personnel to empty the holding tank.

At home, I cleaned the boom box with

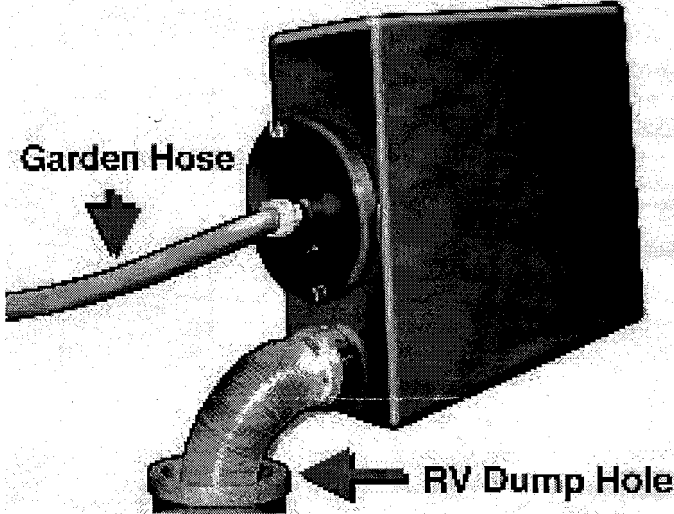
How to Clean Out a Porta Potty



Garden hose fitting comes with porta potty

use wrench to open small fitting

open smaller port to flush out debris



First, find a dump station. Dump stations are located in many campgrounds because the ever growing RV population uses them. Unscrew the small fitting on the large cap with your wrench. Attach your water hose attachment to this opening. Open the smaller port. Place your lids and parts in a place out of the action of the water and wind. Position your porta potty over the dump hole. This can look like a large concrete bathtub or a large pipe. Turn on the water and flush.

The photo above shows a 3-inch waste disposal hose going to the dump hole. Our experience has shown this to be unnecessary - just hold the 3 inch opening over the dump hole. With this method you don't have 3 feet of dump hose to clean after your box is clean. Also, every dump station that we have used has had a hose fitting that fit our garden hose fitting. Clean up area with the hose after detaching the porta potty.

We have found that once home it is nice to air out the porta potty in the sun for a few days. A wash of lemon scented clorox bleach goes along way also.

a hose and car wash soap, let it air dry for 2 days and then stored it in the garage with the caps loosely screwed on.

In conclusion, I too once (or twice was it!) avoided the use of the boom box when it was available on trips. But now that I have graduated Cum Laude from Lake Powell U, I can honestly say it is no big deal. As a user of our great outdoors in a land of so many other users, it is only good citizenship that we all do our little part to

keep it clean for the next visitor. After all, you may do a return visit and would not want to discover your own mess again!

Product Information

The Eco-Safe model SK Boombox (20 use) is made by: GTS, Inc., 4037 E. English, Wichita, KS 67218, phone: (316) 682-4037. Website: www.eco-safe.net