

The dirty word stewards don't talk about: the TOILET. Errgh.

Stewards and stewardesses, you know the drill, engineers, you may have seen a thing or two, deck crew this might be an eye-opener and captains, well, I'll let you read for yourselves.

People say the only certainties in life are death and taxes, well I'm still alive so I can't comment on the former and I'm a South African yachtie, so I have managed to avoid the latter. However, there is one other certainty, one which has become somewhat of a running (sometimes screaming) factor in mine and many other interior crews' lives. I'm talking about cleaning the toilets, and more specifically, cleaning a toilet after a guest has used it.

Introducing the "splash back", we've all been there, beds and heads in a rush. "Port Forward, the VIP and the Master are free", is the call on the radio and you really start to move. Making beds with your left hand, scooping up last night's laundry with the right, then busting into the bathroom to assess the damage. No shower, you say a silent prayer, quick dry of the basin, toilet looks clean, slightly odorous, so you think quick whip round with the toilet brush will do the trick. Only it's too quick, you lose control of the brush and push too hard into the bowl, it's too late, you realise, as the tide of water, toilet cleaner and other unknown horrors splash up to meet your hand, arm or (heaven forbid) your open-mouthed face. You rush to the basin, scrub down the affected areas and run for the Master, vowing to never speak of this to anyone.

This is where the engineers come in, I'm sure many of you have responded to this call on the radio. The classic "help, it

won't go down" scenario. You walk into the Master to find a distressed stew frantically flushing the toilet, you lean over to see what the problem is and let's just say, it's a big one. Better go get the bilge grabbers.



Image credit: buzzfeed

This next one is a nightmare, I refer to it as the "flush first, sometimes twice, scrub second". This is a note to all guests who have tried to do the polite thing and give the toilet a little once over to spare us the full show. If you have made a mess in the loo, particularly after a big night of drinking and hugging the porcelain, by all means, show some love and give it a scrub. But please, please, flush first, sometimes twice and scrub second. There's nothing quite like picking last night's dinner out of the toilet brush before I've had a chance to eat breakfast, think I'll pass on the pineapple this morning.

Moving (not so swiftly) along to the "sudden stop and tiptoe backtrack". I find the occurrence of this little number most frequent in the dayhead. You head in for your 29th check of the day and stop dead, feet glued in place, not for lack of trying to move them, but from actually sticking to the marble (this is going to leave a mark) floor, you peel your heels up slowly and lean onto your tiptoes as you backtrack gingerly and pull the face that can only mean one thing, guess the boss's son missed again.

Now I've got to rush, just been radioed, dessert is ready to be served. Wouldn't want to keep the guests waiting, wondering what I've been up to.