MYTH BUSTERS

Does Dry-Docking Prevent Osmosis?

MYTH

Dry-docking prevents osmosis.

REALITY

Fibreglass is not waterproof, therefore dry-docking does not prevent osmosis on its own. Osmosis occurs whenever fibreglass is submerged in water, so any boat that spends time back in the water remains susceptible.

What Is Osmosis?

Osmosis is a process where water penetrates the outer layer of a fibreglass hull, reacting with materials inside and forming blisters. Fibreglass isn't fully waterproof — it's porous, particularly in boats built with polyester resin, and it's this porosity that allows moisture to gradually work its way into the laminate.

Over time, this can:

- Weaken the hull structure
- Cause cosmetic damage
- Lead to costly repairs

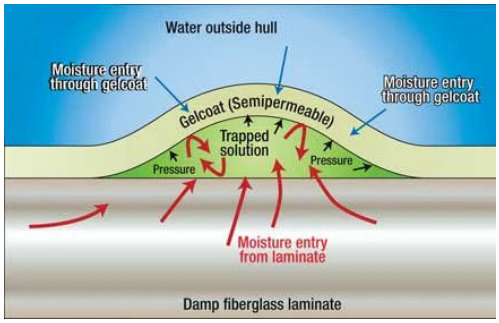
Osmosis occurs when:

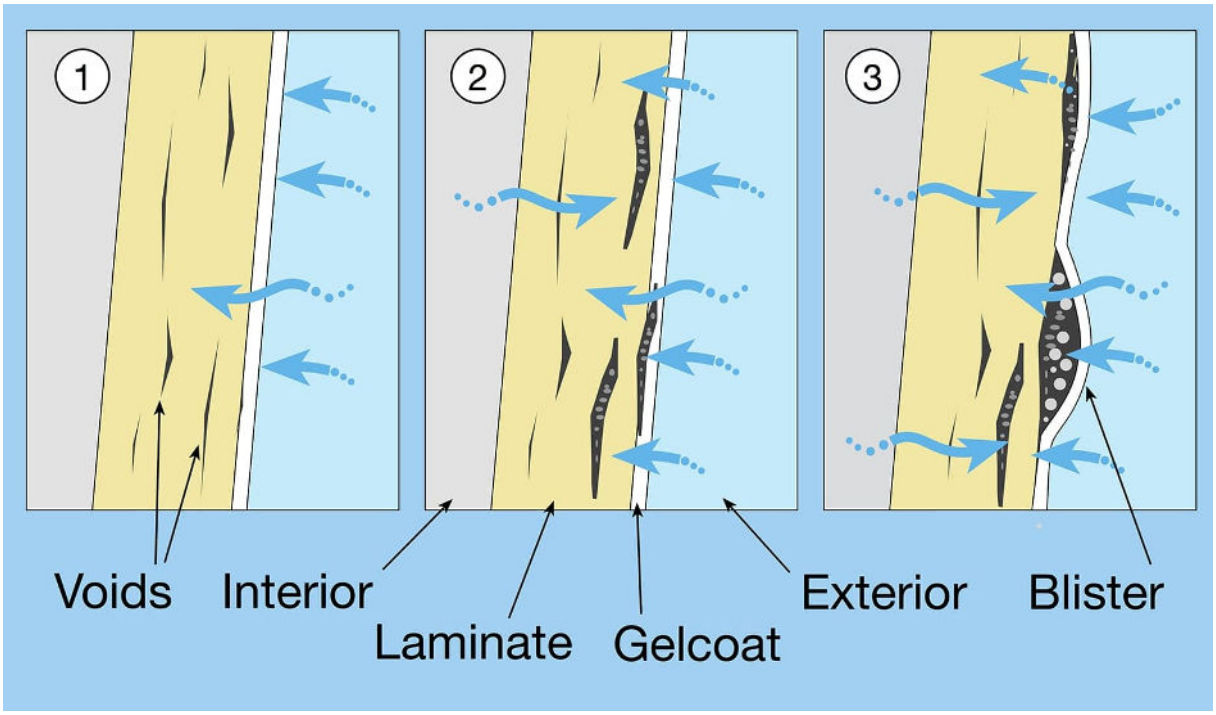
- The hull material is not fully waterproof
- The boat is exposed to water over time

> **Key takeaway: The key factor is water exposure — not storage method alone.**

How Osmosis Progresses

Osmotic blistering develops in stages, as moisture works through voids in the laminate and eventually breaks the surface as a visible blister.





Where Dry-Docking Fits In

This applies whether you're using a SeaPen, FloatBricks, Sunstream, Golden Boat Lift, or any similar dry-docking or boat lift solution — the same basic physics apply.

Even boats stored on a dry-docking system will:

- Still be in the water during use
- Still be exposed to moisture over time

Your boat isn't dry-docked all the time — every time you're out using it, the hull is back in the water. Dry-docking reduces exposure while you're docked, but it can't protect the hull while you're out on the water. That's what a barrier coat is for: protection that covers your boat all the time, not just while it's dry-docked.

Dry-docking does not prevent osmosis. However, it can:

- Reduce the total time your hull is submerged
- Allow the hull to dry between uses
- Keep the hull clean and free from marine growth
- Support better long-term hull condition

> **Key takeaway: Think of it as reducing exposure, not eliminating the cause.**

Reducing Your Risk While Dry-Docking

Dry-docking works best as part of a broader prevention routine. A few practical habits go a long way:

- Keep the hull clean and fully dry between trips
- Inspect the gelcoat regularly for cracks, chips, or soft spots
- Address any blisters early, before moisture spreads further into the laminate

- Avoid long stretches of continuous in-water lay-up where possible
- Pair dry-docking with a quality barrier coat for ongoing protection

The Most Effective Protection: A Barrier Coat

The most effective protection is applying a barrier coat. Note that a barrier coat is not antifoul — it's a non-toxic waterproof coating.

Barrier coats:

- Create a waterproof layer over the hull
- Prevent water penetration into fibreglass
- Extend the life of your vessel

For complete peace of mind, many dry-docking owners combine:

- Dry-docking (reducing exposure)
- Barrier coating (preventing penetration)

> **Need a recommendation? We're happy to provide contact details for businesses we recommend for barrier coat application.**