



Gibraltar Maritime Administration

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Shipping Guidance Notice – 092 The Prevention of Pollution by Sewage (MARPOL Annex IV)

To: Ship Owners, Operators, Master's, and Recognised Organisations

Related legislation or information: -

- MARPOL 73/78 - Annex IV
- Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Regulations 2009

1. Introduction

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973/1978 (MARPOL 73/78) contains a series of annexes that introduce regulations addressing specific areas for the prevention and control of pollution, one of these areas being Sewage.

2. Prevention of Pollution by Sewage

As regards sewage, the requirements in the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution) Regulations 2009 Part 5 apply only to ships engaged in international voyages over 400gt, or less than 400gt but which are certified to carry more than 15 persons.

Schedule 7A contains information on the requirement referred to in regulation 90(B) for standardised discharge connectors on board ships, for the discharge of sewage to shore side facilities and on the potential for non-standard couplings on ships in dedicated trades.

Schedule 7B states the Gibraltar requirements (referred to in regulation 90(E)(3) of the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution) Regulations 2009 in relation to a moderate rate of discharge of sewage which has been stored in holding tanks or which originates from spaces containing living animals. An example of the format for a discharge rate table containing as a minimum the approved discharge rates in relation to the speed and draft of the ship to be included, is depicted within Section 6.1 of the Schedule

3. Special Circumstances

For the purposes of regulation 13 of the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution) Regulations 2009, "special circumstances" are where the owner of the ship:

- a) requests the change of date;
- b) satisfies the GMA that the owner has a very good reason for making the request, and;
- c) complies with any reasonable additional survey requirements which the GMA may impose.

Examples of an owner having "very good reason" might include;

- a) where a ship has been laid up for an extended period, or
- b) where the nature of a ship's business would make a different date much more convenient (such as in the case of a passenger ferry constructed in the summer and whose main trade is in the summer, where the owner may want to have all the refit and survey work done in the winter months).

In the latter case of a request to change the anniversary date for the sake of convenience, the request will only be considered if such a request has not been made before for the ship in question, and the owner confirms in writing to the GMA that this is a one off request for that ship.

However, if the ship in question fails a survey the surveyor will advise the owner or master of the corrective action which is required, and the surveyor may take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the ship does not sail until it can proceed to sea without presenting an unreasonable threat of harm to the marine environment.

Please note a certificate may be cancelled if the Maritime Administrator has reason to believe that it has been issued on the basis of false or erroneous information, or that since the completion of any survey required by the Regulations, the structure, equipment or machinery of the ship has sustained damage or is otherwise deficient.

4. Sewage Systems

Part 5 of the Regulations sets out the required sewage equipment for ships.

A ship to which regulation 77 of Part 5 applies must be equipped with at least one of the following: -

- a) a type approved sewage treatment plant or an approved comminuting and disinfecting system or an approved holding tank.

Sewage treatment plants must meet the international standard on 'the implementation of effluent standards and performance tests'. As there are no international standards for comminuting and disinfecting system or for the construction standards for holding tanks the national standard is set out in this SGN.

5. Comminuting and Disinfecting Systems

For Gibraltar ships, the standards for sewage comminuting and disinfecting systems, referred to in regulation 90(10) of the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution) Regulations 2009, are as follows:

- a) Faecal Coliform Standard¹: Faecal coliform bacteria in the effluent should not exceed 1000/100 cm³ Most Probable Number (M.P.N.)(¹Note: This level may be subject to change as more research material becomes available);
- b) Chlorine residual level to be no more than 0.5mg/l, (by test) post maceration;
- c) Comminuting Standard: A sample of 1 litre is passed through a US Sieve No. 12 (with openings of 1.68 mm). The weight of the material retained on the screen after it has been dried to a constant weight in an oven at 103°C must not exceed 10% of the total suspended solids and shall not be more than 50 mg; and,
- d) Temporary storage of sewage will be by holding tank and the standard for the construction of a holding tank is set out in Section 6 below.

The ship owner should confirm to the GMA or RO acting on behalf of the GMA that the chlorine residual levels are tested on a regular basis, and that this testing is included in the ship's operating procedures.

6. Holding Tanks

The standard for the construction for a sewage holding tank as referred to in regulation 90(4)(a) of the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution) Regulations 2009 is that the tank must be constructed to prevent leakage of its contents under the normal operation of the ship and in all likely weather conditions, until such times as it can be discharged in accordance to the Regulations.

Dylan Cocklan
Maritime Administrator (Ag)

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