
Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water to Minimize the Transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens

Notice to Agents, Owners, Operators, Masters and Officers of Ships

Summary

- This guidance note draws attention to the recently published IMO Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water to Minimize the Transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens.
- This MGN supersedes Merchant Shipping Notice M.1533

1. The Assembly of the International Maritime Organization, by resolution A.868(20), adopted Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water to Minimize the Transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens. These are published by IMO as publication number IMO-661E, ISBN 92-801-1454-9.
2. Resolution A.868(20) also revoked resolution A.774(18) which adopted the Guidelines for Preventing the Introduction of Unwanted Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens from Ships' Ballast Water and Sediment Discharges. These were published by the UK with Merchant Shipping Notice M.1533 which is now correspondingly withdrawn.
3. The new Guidelines provide Flag Administrations and Port State Authorities with guidance on procedures which will minimize the risk of the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms via ships' ballast water and sediments.
4. The Guidelines also include procedures for ships:
 - (i) To carry a ballast water management plan which will include procedures for ballast management, and in particular, for safe ballast exchange at sea.
 - (ii) Recording and reporting.
 - (iii) Precautionary practices to minimize uptake of organisms, removal of sediment and avoidance of unnecessary discharge.
 - (iv) Ballast water management options including exchange at sea, discharge to shore reception facilities, non-release and emergent treatment technologies.
5. It should be noted that the Guidelines should not be taken as adding to, or detracting from any statutory or regulatory requirements which will prevail in the case of conflict with the Guidelines. The

attention of ships' Masters is particularly drawn to the hazards associated with the practice of exchanging ballast water at sea and to Appendix 2 of the Guidelines.

6. Compliance with the Guidelines is not, at present, legally required but shipping agents and shipowners are strongly urged to ensure that vessels discharging ballast in United Kingdom waters comply with the Guidelines to reduce the spread of disease and non-indigenous nuisance species that may be in the water. The Government is at present reviewing the need for regulatory controls, which would reflect the IMO Guidelines, for United Kingdom waters.

7. Masters are advised to contact destination ports to ascertain any local requirements relating to ballast water discharge.

Further information on this Note may be obtained from:-

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