



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

GARBAGE

STOW IT, DON'T THROW IT



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Stow all garbage onboard

The discharge of garbage into the sea from vessels can be just as deadly to marine life as oil or chemicals. Garbage creates entanglement and ingestion hazards which threaten the lives of turtles, marine mammals and seabirds.

In 2013 international laws came into force that prohibit the discharge into the sea of **all** types of garbage from vessels of **all** sizes. This includes yachts, dinghies, trawlers, fishing, recreational, tugs, ferries, general cargo, and barges, among others.

It is the responsibility of all seafarers and boat operators to prevent garbage from entering the sea from their vessels. Information in this booklet provides an overview of garbage and its impacts and the laws regulating its disposal. More detailed information can be found at www.amsa.gov.au.



The nature of garbage

Garbage discharged at sea does not disappear - it becomes marine debris, can drift large distances and persist for months and, in some cases, hundreds of years (see table on page 3).

Garbage includes all kinds of food wastes, domestic wastes and operational wastes such as all plastics (including degradable plastics), cargo residues, incinerator ashes, cigarette butts, deck sweepings, wood, cooking oil, bottles, any paper products including cardboard, crockery, dunnage, lining and packing materials, rags, metal, glass, aluminium tins and fishing gear (line, nets, traps, floats etc.).

Plastics and other synthetic waste including discarded fishing gear, glass and metal are the main components of marine debris, with an estimated eight billion tonnes entering the world's oceans annually from both offshore and onshore sources. This debris has an impact on hundreds of species worldwide, including numerous Australian species such as sea turtles, seabirds, shorebirds, cetaceans, and corals. These species are primarily impacted by entanglement in and ingestion of the debris.

It is estimated that by 2050, the quantity of plastics in the ocean will outweigh that of fish¹. Discarded rope, fishing lines and plastic material not only pose a threat to marine life, but can damage vessels by getting caught in propeller shafts and/or block water intakes, causing major damage resulting in expensive repairs and loss of income.

Plastic debris degrades into fragments known as microplastics, which can be smaller than a grain of sand. Microplastics can be found everywhere on land and in all oceans, even in the deep sea. They are extremely difficult to clean up and can release toxins if they enter the food chain.

¹ World Economic Forum, 'The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics', January 2016

Table 1
*Time taken for objects
to breakdown at sea
(source: Tangaroa Blue)*

Item	Time
Newspaper	6 weeks
Apple Core	7 weeks
Cardboard	2 months
Milk Carton	3 months
Cotton Rope	14 months
Plywood	3 years
Wool Socks	1-5 years
Cigarette Butt	1-5 years
Plastic bag	20 years
Styrofoam	60 years
Plastic Milk Bottle	100 years
Aluminium Can	200 years
6-pack Plastic Rings	400 years
Plastic Bottle	450 years
Disposable Nappy	475 years
Fishing Line	600 years
Glass Bottle	undetermined



The law

The international requirements for the discharge of garbage from vessels are set out in the Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (known as MARPOL) and apply to all vessels of all sizes and in all marine waters.

Commonwealth and State/Northern Territory legislation enacting MARPOL applies in all Australian waters including bays and estuaries. These laws impose strict controls and substantial fines for polluters. The table below provides an overview of the discharge requirements. For more detailed guidance on the discharge requirements, please refer to the text of MARPOL Annex V or the *2012 Guidelines for the Implementation of MARPOL Annex V*, which are available at www.amsa.gov.au.

Type of garbage	Vessels	Offshore platforms (more than 12nm from land) and all vessels within 500m of such platforms
Food waste comminuted or ground	Discharge permitted ≥ 3 nm from the nearest land, en route and as far as practicable	Discharge permitted
Food waste not comminuted or ground	Discharge permitted ≥ 12 nm from the nearest land, en route and as far as practicable	Discharge prohibited
Cargo residues* either contained or not contained in wash water	Discharge permitted ≥ 12 nm from the nearest land, en route and as far as practicable	Discharge prohibited
Cleaning agents and additives* contained in cargo hold wash water	Discharge permitted	Discharge prohibited
Cleaning agents and additives* in deck and external surfaces wash water	Discharge permitted	Discharge prohibited
All other garbage including plastics, synthetic ropes, fishing gear, plastic garbage bags, incinerator ashes, clinkers, cooking oil, floating dunnage, lining and packing materials, paper, rags, glass, metal, bottles, crockery and similar refuse	Discharge prohibited	Discharge prohibited
Mixed garbage	When garbage is mixed with or contaminated by other substances prohibited from discharge or having different discharge requirements, the more stringent requirements shall apply	

Records and plans required on certain vessels

Garbage management plan

Vessels 100 gross tonnage and above, vessels certified to carry 15 or more persons, and fixed and floating platforms are required to carry a garbage management plan. The plan must contain procedures for minimising, collecting, storing, processing and disposal of garbage. It should designate the person/s in charge of carrying out the plan. The plan must be written in the working language of the vessel's crew and all crew must follow the procedures in that plan. An example of a garbage management plan is available from www.amsa.gov.au/environment/regulations/garbage-management.

Garbage record book

Vessels 400 gross tonnage and above, and those vessels certified to carry 15 or more people engaged in international voyages, are required to maintain a Garbage Record Book. The details of every garbage discharge to onshore facilities or permitted discharge at sea need to be recorded in this book. The record book must be kept onboard for a minimum of two years and be available for inspection by authorities. Garbage Record Books can be purchased from AMSA.



Signage required on all vessels > 12 metres

All vessels of 12 metres or more in length are required by law to display signs or placards that provide information about applicable garbage laws. The placards should be visible in all areas onboard the vessel where garbage is generated or stored and in full view of crew and passengers. The wording on the placards should be similar to the following examples.

Placards may be ordered from: www.amsa.gov.au/forms-and-publications.

INTERNATIONAL POLLUTION REGULATIONS MARPOL CONVENTION ANNEX V DISCHARGE OF GARBAGE INTO THE SEA IS PROHIBITED	
<p>Garbage should be retained on board for discharge at port reception facilities. Discharge of the following garbage is only permitted while the ship is 'en route' and as far as practicable from the nearest land*:</p>	
<p>FOOD WASTE COMMINUTED OR GROUND through equipment with particle size no greater than 25mm* NOTE: The discharge into the sea of cooking oil is prohibited</p>	<p>More than 3nm from nearest land* Food waste on ships entering and operating in Australian waters is subject to biosecurity requirements and must not be discharged within Australia's territorial sea (12 nm limit)</p>
<p>FOOD WASTE that has not been processed</p>	<p>More than 12 nm from nearest land*</p>
<p>CARGO RESIDUES not harmful to the marine environment*</p>	<p>Discharge permitted</p>
<p>CLEANING AGENTS/ADDITIVES not harmful to the marine environment* contained in cargo hold, deck and external surface wash water</p>	<p>Discharge permitted</p>
<p>ANIMAL CARCASSES*</p>	<p>As far from the nearest land* as possible</p>
<p>SPECIAL AREAS including ANTARCTIC AREA Additional restrictions apply*</p>	<p>FOOD WASTE COMMINUTED OR GROUND -as far as practicable from areas of ice concentration exceeding 1/10, but not less than 12nm from nearest land, ice shell or fast ice Discharge of introduced avian products PROHIBITED in Antarctic Area unless incinerated, autoclaved or otherwise treated to be made sterile</p>
<p>Garbage can be incinerated in equipment complying with MARPOL Annex VI Each discharge or incineration must be recorded in the Garbage Record Book All Seafarers must follow procedures for handling garbage in accordance with the Garbage Management Plan Violation of these requirements may result in penalties</p>	
<p>*The definition of 'nearest land' includes the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait area and can be found in MARPOL Annex V *Refer to MARPOL Annex V and guidelines for more information</p>	

INTERNATIONAL POLLUTION REGULATIONS MARPOL CONVENTION, ANNEX V DISCHARGE OF GARBAGE INTO THE SEA IS PROHIBITED	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All garbage must be retained on board and disposed of at facilities on land, in port or a marina. • Unprocessed food waste can be discharged at sea only while the vessel is moving and is as far as practicable from the nearest land (but not less than 12 nautical miles). • For vessels of 100 gross tonnage and above, and every vessel which is certified to carry 15 or more persons, refer to the Garbage Management Plan. • Fishing and tourist vessels are allowed to release small amounts of food into the sea for the purpose of fish feeding or tourist operations. 	
<p>Note: Cooking oil cannot be discharged into the sea Violations of these requirements may result in penalties</p>	



Managing waste onboard

All materials that are considered to be waste and are no longer of use onboard the vessel, need to be disposed of properly at onshore facilities. This requires waste to be managed onboard to ensure that it is not accidentally lost at sea. Vessel operators also need to plan ways to reduce the amount of garbage generated onboard. This can be done by carefully planning what is taken to sea.

Using crockery instead of disposable cups and plates, and reducing the amount of plastics through bulk packaging of consumables, can assist. Compacting or crushing garbage will take up less storage space on the vessel until returning to land and disposing of at onshore facilities.

Onboard separation and storage of garbage is recommended to encourage reuse or recycling following delivery to appropriate bins or facilities onshore. Recycling of some materials such as aluminium cans, glass bottles and plastic bottles may have a financial benefit when disposed of at onshore facilities in certain States.



Food waste that is processed through equipment to produce particles of not bigger than 25mm can be discharged into the sea, if the discharge occurs as far as practicable from the 'nearest land', but not less than 3nm. Unprocessed food waste can be discharged directly into the sea if the discharge occurs as far as practicable from the nearest land, but not less than 12 nautical miles (nm). Cooking oil is not considered to be food waste, and cannot be discharged into the sea.

The definition of 'nearest land' includes the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait area and can be found at www.amsa.gov.au/environment/regulations/maritime-discharges/nearest-land/. If the required distances are not reached during operations, all food waste needs to be stored onboard by either double bagging and/or freezing (if a freezer is onboard) until it can be disposed of at shore facilities.

Small quantities of food released directly into the sea for the specific purpose of fish feeding in connection with fishing or tourist operations is permitted.

Cleaning agents and additives in deck and external surfaces wash water can be discharged into the sea provided that they are not classified as Harmful to the Marine Environment (HME). Products are considered HME if they are a "harmful substance" in accordance with the criteria in MARPOL Annex III and contain any components which are known to be carcinogenic, mutagenic or reprotoxic (CMR). More information on this classification can be found in the *2012 Guidelines for the Implementation of MARPOL Annex V*.

Fishing vessels

Fishing vessel operators must comply with the general garbage discharge requirements as well as reporting accidental discharges or loss of fishing gear such as trawl, gill and other fishing nets or line scraps that pose significant threat to the marine environment. The discharge of this gear can create a navigational hazard that may damage and/or affect the safety of other vessels. Where possible, fishing gear should make use of natural material that will degrade, to reduce the potential for entanglement of marine life if the gear is lost.

If garbage or fishing gear is accidentally discharged or lost, an entry must be made in the vessel's Official Logbook or Garbage Record Book, if one is required (see page 5). The entry must contain the location, circumstances of, and reasons for the discharge or loss, it must also include details of the items discharged or lost, and a description of precautions taken to prevent or minimise the discharge or loss. If large amounts of fishing gear are lost these details should be reported to AMSA's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC - Australia). This allows other vessels to look out for the lost gear and avoid or retrieve if practical.

Operators are also encouraged to utilise gear identification systems to assist recovery and return of lost gear. Fishers are encouraged to make every effort to retrieve lost gear and other garbage found at sea, if safe practice allows.



Shore facilities

Under international law there is an obligation upon Australia to provide facilities to receive all types of waste from vessels. This includes all types of garbage, oil, chemicals and sewage. Facilities are required to be appropriate and adequate for vessel activities in the particular area. Facilities should be available at marinas, wharves, fishing cooperatives, berths and ports. The type of facility will range from bins or skips emptied by local councils or contractors, to barge collection services and pump out operations, depending on the needs of the location.

If there are no facilities available for the disposal of garbage at a marina or wharf, the owner or port authority should be contacted. If reception facilities are not available at a port, the port authority should be contacted. An alleged inadequacy of port reception facilities can also be reported to AMSA. Details of this process can be found at www.amsa.gov.au/environment/regulations/waste-reception-facilities/. State/territory and local officials should also be notified of any inadequate facilities.



Penalties

Commonwealth and State/Northern Territory legislation enacting MARPOL applies in all Australian waters. Vessels that are found to have discharged in contravention of MARPOL and Australian legislation are held accountable and, in addition to possible detention while investigations are undertaken, may be subject to substantial penalties.

More than 200 investigations into the pollution of Australian waters by ships have been successfully prosecuted under Commonwealth and complimentary, or similar, State legislation implementing MARPOL. Details on these prosecutions are available on AMSA's website: www.amsa.gov.au/environment/reporting-ship-sourced-pollution/prosecutions/.

AMSA also uses alternative compliance and enforcement options such as issuing compliance directions, improvement notices and educational information in order to deter offenders from discharging wastes in Australian waters.



You can help

Protection of the marine environment is everyone's responsibility. Be aware of the threats to our waterways and oceans and of the serious effects pollutants can have on the marine environment.

- REPORT all illegal discharges of garbage to local authorities or to AMSA
- Take note of the vessel's name or number, the time, date and GPS location of the discharge; a description of the type of garbage discharged, including quantity; and other witnesses or ships in the vicinity
- Take photographs or videos of the pollution, the ship or person involved or collect the garbage, if possible.

This information is useful for further investigation and possible prosecution of the polluters.

Reports can be made to AMSA at any time:

Within Australia: 1800 641 792 (freecall)

Outside Australia: +61 2 6230 6811

You can also submit a Pollution Report at:

www.amsa.gov.au/environment/reporting-ship-sourced-pollution/.

More information

For more information on maritime garbage laws and the requirements, contact your local State maritime transport or environment authority or AMSA:

Marine Environment
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Email: eps@amsa.gov.au

Web: www.amsa.gov.au/environment/regulation