

North Sea ship emissions control area adopted at environment meeting

Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) - 53rd session 18-22 July 2005

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted amendments to the IMO regulations on the prevention of air pollution to establish a new special emissions control area for the North Sea when it met for its 53rd session from 18-22 July. MEPC also agreed to develop a new mandatory instrument to cover ship recycling and adopted four new particularly sensitive sea areas (PSSAs).

Amendments to MARPOL Annex VI

MEPC adopted amendments to the *Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships* in MARPOL Annex VI, including one on the new North Sea SOx Emission Control Area (SECA). The entry into force date for the North Sea SECA amendment is expected to be 21 November 2006, with its full implementation 12 months later.

MARPOL Annex VI entered into force on 19 May 2005 and sets limits on sulphur oxide (SOx) and nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from ship exhausts and prohibits deliberate emissions of ozone-depleting substances.

The Annex establishes a global cap of 4.5 percent by mass (% m/m) on the sulphur content of fuel oil. The sulphur content of fuel oil used onboard ships operating in a SECA must not exceed 1.5% m/m or, alternatively, ships must fit an exhaust gas cleaning system or use other methods to limit SOx emissions.

The Committee noted information gained from monitoring the worldwide sulphur content in fuel oils for 2004 which gave a three-year (2002-2004) rolling average of sulphur content in fuel oil worldwide of 2.67% m/m.

MEPC adopted *Guidelines on on-board exhaust gas-SOx cleaning systems; Survey Guidelines under the Harmonized System for Survey and Certification for MARPOL Annex VI; Unified interpretations of MARPOL Annex VI; and Guidelines for Port State Control under MARPOL Annex VI.*

MEPC also adopted amendments to update the NOx Technical Code.

MEPC approved *Interim Guidelines for Voluntary Ship CO₂ Emission Indexing for Use in Trials.*

Review of Annex VI

The Committee agreed on the need to undertake a review of Annex VI and the NOx Technical Code with a view to revising the regulations to take account of current technology and the need to further reduce emissions from ships. MEPC instructed the Sub-Committee on Bulk Liquids and Gases (BLG) to carry out the review by 2007, and specifically to:

- examine available and developing techniques for the reduction of emissions of air pollutants; review the relevant technologies and the potential for a reduction of NOx emissions and recommend future limits for NOx emissions;
- review technology and the need for a reduction of SOx emissions and justify and recommend future limits for SOx emissions;
- consider the need, justification and possibility of controlling volatile organic compounds emissions from cargoes;
- with a view to controlling emissions of particulate matter (PM), study current emission levels of PM from marine engines, including their size distribution and quantity, and recommend actions to be taken for the reduction of PM from ships. Since reduction of NOx and SOx emission is expected to also reduce PM emission, estimate the level of PM emission reduction through this route;
- consider reducing NOx and PM emission limits for existing engines;
- consider whether Annex VI emission reductions or limitations should be extended to include diesel engines that use alternative fuels and engine systems/power plants other than diesel engines; and
- review the texts of Annex VI, NOx Technical Code and related guidelines and recommend necessary amendments.