

MARPOL Annex VI – Prevention of air pollution from ships

The New Zealand Government will become party to Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) by late 2021.

MARPOL Annex VI seeks to address:

- the impact of air pollution from shipping activities on human health and environments, and
- the impacts of emissions from shipping activities on climate change and ozone layer depletion.

There are eight key regulations relating to emission controls.

Sulphur oxides and particulate matter

What are sulphur oxides?

Sulphur oxides (SO_x) are harmful pollutants that have negative health and environmental impacts. They are created through the combustion of fuel containing sulphur.

Who does this apply to?

This regulation applies to all ships that use fuel oil (including gas or distillate and residual oils), regardless of size. Those affected are likely to be ships that have previously used higher sulphur content fuels.

We are working through how this regulation will be applied in NZ.

Use of scrubbers

As an alternative means to meet the sulphur limit requirement, a Flag State may accept use of a higher sulphur content fuel if the ship is fitted with an appropriate Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (EGCS, or 'scrubber'), provided this achieves the same level of emissions reduction. Scrubbers are expected to comply with IMO guidelines.

The Ministry for the Environment is considering how to regulate discharges from scrubbers within NZ coastal waters. Note that some states do not allow the use of scrubbers in their ports.

What does Annex VI require in relation to SO_x?

Annex VI requires that the sulphur content of fuel oil used or carried for use on board a ship shall not exceed 0.50% mass by mass (m/m).

If a ship is operating in an Emission Control Area (ECA) as specified in Annex VI, the sulphur content shall not exceed 0.10% m/m. ECAs under Regulation 14 are, broadly, the Baltic Sea area, the North Sea area, the North American Emission Control Area, and the United States Caribbean Emission Control Area. Ships that operate in ECAs and carry fuel with different sulphur content levels must have a documented procedure for switching to compliant fuels if they enter or leave an ECA.

Where can I get more info?

Search for Sulphur-2020 and scrubber guidelines on the IMO website.
www.imo.org

Search for exhaust gas cleaning systems on the Ministry for the Environment website.
www.mfe.govt.nz

What do you think?

- What impact will meeting the requirements have on your operation?
- What concerns do you have about meeting the requirements?
- Is there anything else you need to know?

What are your views?

- How do shipping companies intend to achieve the low sulphur fuel requirements? Switching to compliant fuel (eg diesel, low-sulphur fuel oil), or closed/open loop scrubbers?
- Should New Zealand consider any restrictions around discharges to the marine environment from open loop scrubbers?

Contact us

You can contact us with any comments or questions at MARPOLAnnexVIProject@maritimenz.govt.nz