



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority



**STOW IT
DON'T THROW IT**

Stow it don't throw it

Garbage dumped into the sea is no longer an environmentally or socially acceptable practice. Australian laws restricting the discharge of certain types of garbage have been in place since 1990 and all vessel operators should be aware of these restrictions.

Historically garbage was discharged into the sea, as the oceans were seen as vast domains where garbage disappeared because it either decayed or sank.

Today marine debris in the oceans is one of the major threats to the marine environment, estimated to kill more than one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals and turtles each year through ingestion and entanglement. Plastic bags can be mistaken for jelly fish, a source of food for turtles and whales, while other plastic material is eaten by fish, seabirds and other marine life, causing death.

Both non-biodegradable plastic products and so called biodegradable products once disposed into the sea can persist for indefinite periods of time and potentially cause damage to vessels and harm to humans and marine life.

Entanglement, a major problem



Repairs can be costly



The beauty of our coastlines is devalued as garbage accumulates. Beaches, often in remote places, are polluted by garbage washed up from the sea. Much of this garbage comes from ships, yachts, trawlers and other marine craft. The fact is that garbage does not just magically appear – it is generally the result of people's negligence.

Garbage is also costly for recreational boaters, the fishing industry and other vessels as rope and plastic materials may become caught in propeller shafts or block water intakes causing major damage, expensive repairs and loss of income while vessels are repaired.

All seafarers are encouraged to recover persistent garbage from the sea as opportunities arise and if safety practices allow. Such garbage should be disposed at shore facilities and the circumstances reported to the authorities. If you use the sea for recreational or commercial purposes it is in your interest to ensure that our seas stay clean and unpolluted.

The law

To prevent pollution of the sea by garbage, Australian laws impose strict controls and provide heavy fines for polluters. These laws complement international laws. The garbage regulations are based on the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (known as MARPOL) and apply to all vessels including dinghies, yachts and fishing vessels as well as large international trading ships.

All vessel operators should be aware of two basic principles:

1. No plastics thrown into the sea
2. No garbage discharged within 12 nautical miles (nm) from the nearest land.

Vessels operating within 12nm from land are required to retain all garbage onboard for disposal at shore facilities in ports, harbours and marinas. Operators must ensure that all garbage is secure while stored onboard the vessel. Even if the wind blows garbage off your vessel it is still an offence. When your vessel operates beyond 12nm from nearest land, best environmental practice is for all garbage to be disposed at facilities on land.

A distance “from the nearest land” must be measured from the baseline from which the Australian territorial sea is determined. Sometimes what you think is just a sand bar or a reef is defined as land under Australian laws, therefore you must be aware that the baseline is not just the low water mark in some coastal or offshore areas. For more information see www.amsa.gov.au/Marine_Environment_Protection/Protection_of_Pollution_from-Ships/NearestLand.asp

If you are boating in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait region, you should know the discharge of all types of garbage is prohibited. The only exception is the release of small quantities of food waste for the specific purpose of fish feeding for tourist or fishing operations.

The law does permit the disposal of certain types of garbage beyond 12 nm from nearest land however there are strict requirements on where and how this can be done. Large vessels with specialised grinding/shredding equipment are able to discharge certain types of garbage at a specific distance from land.

Penalties

Fines of up to \$A1.3 million for companies and \$A260,000 for individuals may be imposed on vessel operators illegally discharging garbage at sea. To avoid a fine, bring all your garbage back to shore facilities.

Recently there have been a number of prosecutions for garbage offences in Australian waters. Examples of penalties imposed on vessel owners include: for food waste discharged in the Great Barrier Reef fines ranging from \$4825 to \$6000; and for plastic discharged into the sea fines ranging from \$350 to \$35,000.

Garbage impacts remote beaches



Types of garbage

Garbage from vessels may be classed as domestic, operational or maintenance wastes. This includes but is not limited to:

- ▶ food wastes
- ▶ paper products/cardboard
- ▶ rags
- ▶ packing materials
- ▶ metal
- ▶ fishing gear
- ▶ crockery
- ▶ bait boxes
- ▶ glass
- ▶ nets
- ▶ bottles
- ▶ cargo residues
- ▶ paints
- ▶ deck sweepings
- ▶ wire
- ▶ wood products
- ▶ lining
- ▶ all plastic products

Total ban on plastics

The discharge of plastics into the sea is totally prohibited in any location. Boat operators must retain all plastic material for disposal at shore facilities. A wide variety of plastic products are manufactured and vessel operators should be aware of these materials. Plastic material used at sea includes:

- ▶ trawl and fishing nets
- ▶ synthetic ropes and nets
- ▶ plastic sheeting, bags or utensils
- ▶ 'six pack' holders
- ▶ electrical and electronic components
- ▶ fibreglass
- ▶ paints
- ▶ fishing floats or buoys
- ▶ strapping bands etc.



Minimise how much you take to sea

Boat operators need to plan ways to reduce the amount of garbage onboard. Minimise the amount of garbage you generate onboard by carefully planning what you take to sea. For example don't use disposable products - use crockery instead of paper cups and plates. Reduce the amount of plastics and use bulk packaging of consumables. If you compact or crush your garbage it will take up less space on the vessel and can be disposed later at shore facilities. Food waste can be double bagged and/or frozen if you have a freezer onboard. Replace plastic sheets with reusable covering material.

Fishing gear

Fishing vessel operators have an added responsibility not to pollute the resource which provides their livelihood. Discarded trawl, gill and other fishing nets or line scraps can become a navigational hazard and cause considerable damage and affect the safety of other vessels. It is preferable for fishing gear to have degradable panels of natural material to reduce the potential for entanglement of marine life if the gear is lost. In addition operators are 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 persistent garbage found at sea if safety practices allow. If you do lose large amounts of fishing gear, report the approximate position and reasons for the loss to the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC - Australia). This also allows other vessels to look out for the lost gear and avoid, or retrieve it if practical.

Retrieve lost gear



Signage or placards

All vessels of 12 metres or more in length are required to display signs or placards which provide information about the garbage laws. The placards should be visible in areas where garbage may be generated and in full view of crew and passengers. The wording for the placards should be similar to the following example.

INTERNATIONAL POLLUTION REGULATIONS

MARPOL CONVENTION ANNEX V

DISPOSAL OF ALL PLASTICS INTO THE SEA IS

PROHIBITED

ALL GARBAGE SHOULD BE RETAINED ONBOARD AND DISPOSED USING FACILITIES IN THE PORT OR MARINA. DISPOSAL OF ANY GARBAGE IS PROHIBITED IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF OR TORRES STRAIT AREA. OUTSIDE THIS AREA, SOME GARBAGE (EG FOOD WASTE, PAPER) CAN BE DISPOSED AT SEA ONLY IF THE VESSEL IS MORE THAN 12NM FROM THE NEAREST LAND (INCLUDING CAYS, REEFS).

CONTACT MARITIME AUTHORITIES FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

If you operate your vessel beyond 12nm from the nearest land, you need to include specific information about where non-plastic garbage is permitted to be discharged. (See further information below)

Shore facilities

Under international and Australian requirements, shore facilities for the disposal of waste from vessels should be available. Facilities must be appropriate for the amount of boating or shipping activity in the area.

If shore facilities are not adequate for the disposal of your garbage, let the marina owner or port authority know. You should also notify State/Territory and local officials of any inadequate facilities. If enough people express concern the facilities are likely to be upgraded.

Shipboard waste management

MARPOL requires vessels over 400 tons to develop a waste management plan which contains procedures for collecting, storing, processing and disposal of garbage. Ships may also be fitted with appropriate garbage handling equipment such as compactors or incinerators.

Vessels over 400 tons also need to maintain a garbage record book and enter details of every garbage incineration, disposal at sea or waste facility receipts in this book. The record book must be kept onboard for a minimum of two years and be available for inspection by authorities.





More information

This pamphlet concentrates on the operation of vessels close to land within 12nm. If you want more information on maritime garbage disposal laws and the requirements when operating beyond 12nm, contact your local state marine/ port/ transport authority or

Environment Protection
Maritime Standards Division
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Phone: 02 6279 5933

Facsimile: 02 6279 5026

Email: [email eps@amsa.gov.au](mailto:email_eps@amsa.gov.au)

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US Center for Marine Conservation

You can help

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

All illegal discharges of garbage should be reported to the local authorities or to AMSA. Polluters must be held responsible for their actions.

If you witness a vessel polluting make a report to the local maritime/port/transport authority or through the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) in Canberra. Be sure to get the vessel's name or number, the location of the discharge and a description of the type of garbage disposed. Take photographs or collect the garbage if possible. This will be useful for further investigation and possible prosecution of the polluters.

RCC operates 24 hours and can be contacted on:

FREECALL: 1800 641 792

Phone: 02 6230 6811

Facsimile: 02 6230 6868

www.amsa.gov.au