Garbage Record Book — study guide

Garbage is one of the easiest pollutants to control, if the rules are followed. This guide covers MARPOL Annex V, the Garbage Record Book, special areas, placards and the exceptions to the disposal rules.[1]

MARPOL Annex V

Annex V entered into force on **31 December 1988** and regulates the disposal of garbage from ships. A large amount of the garbage that pollutes the oceans and washes up on beaches comes from holidaymakers, seafarers and cities. Marine pollution can cause mutations and diseases harmful to the entire marine food web as well as to human beings.

The garbage management plan

The plan's procedures include recording disposals in the Garbage Record Book, using port reception facilities to dispose of garbage, and issuing placards around the vessel. An **electronic record book** must meet system specifications covering security, system updates, accountability, ability to meet MARPOL regulations, and data storage.

Disposal methods

Garbage is disposed of by incineration; by discharge to reception facilities ashore or to another vessel; by accidental or other exceptional discharges; or by discharge into the sea (where permitted).

Exceptions

The exceptions to the disposal-at-sea rules are: disposal necessary to secure the safety of the vessel and those on board; disposal necessary for saving life at sea; and the escape of garbage resulting from damage to the vessel or its equipment, provided all reasonable precautions were taken before and after the damage to prevent or minimise the escape.

Special areas and placards

Special areas established under Annex V include the North Sea, the Black Sea, the Antarctic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, where disposal rules are stricter. Placards notifying crew and passengers of the disposal requirements must be displayed on ships of **12 metres or more** in length — not 10 metres.

Improving reception facilities

Ways being considered to improve garbage reception facilities include improving the effectiveness of port reception facilities and treatment in reducing marine plastic litter; providing separate garbage collection for plastic waste from vessels, including fishing

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gear, to reuse or recycle; providing training on basic marine-environment awareness for those fishing from vessels; and enhancing public awareness, education and seafarer training.

Key facts to remember

- MARPOL Annex V entered into force 31 December 1988; regulates shipboard garbage.
- Garbage management plan: record in the Garbage Record Book, use port reception facilities, issue placards.
- Electronic record book specs: security, updates, accountability, MARPOL compliance, data storage.
- Disposal: incineration, reception facilities, accidental discharges, discharge to sea.
- Exceptions: safety of the vessel, saving life at sea, escape from damage with reasonable precautions taken.
- Special areas include North Sea, Black Sea, Antarctic Sea, Mediterranean Sea. Placards required at 12 m+ LOA.

Sources

1. IMO MARPOL Annex V — Regulations for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships (including the Garbage Record Book, special areas and placard requirements).