



For Immediate Release
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Shipping Air Pollution Treaty Sets Global Standards **Air quality benefits minimal, but will set stage for cleaner engines and fuels**

New international air pollution rules for large ocean-going vessels will finally take effect in May 2005. The new standards will reduce smog-forming emissions from ships in U.S. waters by only 12 percent by 2030, but will open the door to setting more stringent environmental standards for ship engines and bunker fuels.

The regulations set the first-ever global limits on ship exhaust emissions, bunker fuel content, on-board incineration and release of ozone-depleting substances by ships. The new air rules retroactively apply to cargo, container, cruise and other sea-going ships built since January 2000 and flagged by nations including the U.S. that are party to the international treaty on shipping pollution, known as MARPOL 73/78.

“While these standards will not stop ships from blackening the air with diesel exhaust, it will provide a mechanism to begin ratcheting down engine emissions standards and requiring cleaner fuels in coastal waters,” said Teri Shore, Clean Vessels Campaign Director. “However, international negotiations take years to conclude, so we urgently need stronger national and state measures in the interim.”

After a seven-year process, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) announced in late May that “Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships will enter into force on 19 May 2005, following the ratification by the Independent State of Samoa of Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78).” The United States has not yet ratified Annex VI, but Congress is expected to do so sometime this year. The IMO news release can be viewed at www.imo.org.

Regulations on Prevention of Air Pollution from ships

The regulations set a global cap of 4.5 percent m/m on the sulphur content of fuel oil, a level well above the worldwide average sulphur content of about 3 percent, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

What’s more meaningful is that Annex VI contains provisions allowing for special "SOx Emission Control Areas" (SECA) to be established with more stringent controls on sulphur emissions. In these areas, the sulphur content of fuel oil used on board ships must not exceed 1.5 percent m/m. Bluewater Network has begun work with state and federal agencies to forward a proposal to establish a SECA along the coasts of North America.

The Baltic Sea Area is already designated as a SOx Emission Control area. In March 2000, the North Sea was approved as a SOx Emission Control Area that will take effect when MARPOL Annex VI enters into force.

Annex VI also sets limits on emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) from diesel engines. However, these standards do little to encourage technology that can provide as much as 95 percent reductions in NOx emissions. Bluewater Network is joining with state and federal agencies to advocate for a new round of negotiations to set more meaningful standards as soon as possible.

Annex VI also prohibits the incineration on board ships of certain products, such as contaminated packaging materials and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). However, it does not prohibit incineration in ports or coastal waters except for certain materials, including oil sludge.

Annex VI prohibits deliberate emissions of ozone depleting substances, which include halons and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). New installations containing ozone-depleting substances are prohibited on all ships. But new installations containing hydro-chlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) are permitted until 1 January 2020

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Bluewater Network is a national environmental organization dedicated to reducing dependence on fossil fuels & eradicating other root causes of air and water pollution, global warming, & habitat destruction. More than 20,000 members in all 50 states and four nations have already joined.

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