



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commandant
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Voluntary Vessel Fuel Oil Sampling Program

MARPOL Annex VI requires ships to limit sulfur emissions in the ship's exhaust, either by using fuel with low sulfur content or by an approved, fully-operational emission control technology. For the former option, as of January 1, 2015, vessels must use fuel oil with a sulfur content not exceeding 0.10%, or 1000 parts per million (ppm) within the North American Emission Control Area (ECA) and U. S. Caribbean Sea ECA.

To help determine industry compliance, the Coast Guard is initiating a voluntary fuel sampling program. Beginning February 29, 2016, when Port State Control Officers are conducting examinations, they may request fuel samples from vessels. Initially, the Coast Guard will only request samples at select U. S. ports and may use sampling or testing assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency. However, the voluntary sampling program is expected to grow to include more ports and vessels, including domestic vessels. Key points about the new program include the following:

- Sampling is voluntary – the Coast Guard will ask vessel masters for permission to sample;
- Vessels that provide voluntary samples will not receive sanctions if the voluntary samples are non-compliant; and
- All samples will be taken at appropriate locations by the ship's crew with Coast Guard oversight.

This voluntary program will help assess industry compliance with MARPOL Annex VI ECA requirements. For non-compliant samples, the Coast Guard may notify the Administration of the coastal state from where the fuel was purchased. This voluntary sampling program does not change the Coast Guard's authority to require samples when there are clear grounds to suspect non-compliance (e.g., a BDN showing higher concentrations of sulfur than required). These samples are taken in accordance with CG-543 Policy Letter 09-01, http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgcvc/cvc/policy/policy_letters/543/CG-543_pol09-01.pdf.

Questions regarding fuel oil sampling should be forwarded to the Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, Foreign and Offshore Vessel Division (CG-CVC-2), at 202-372-1218 or by email at PortStateControl@uscg.mil.

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