

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Vessel Discharges Require Permit

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Contact Information: Dave Ryan, (202) 564-4355/7827 / ryan.dave@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. – Dec. 18, 2008) A new general permit will reduce releases of 26 types of discharges from vessels operating in U.S. waters. Beginning Dec. 19, approximately 61,000 domestically flagged commercial vessels and 8,000 foreign flagged vessels will need to comply with the permit.

As a result of a court ruling, vessel owners and operators who have previously been exempt from Clean Water Act requirements for the last 35 years will now require a permit starting Dec. 19.

“EPA met the deadline and delivered a protective and practical permit to protect the nation’s waterways from ship-borne pollution and to avoid an environmental and economic shipwreck,” said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles.

Without this permit, all shipping within U.S. waters could come to a halt because of liability risks.

The permit covers non-recreational vessels 79 feet in length or longer, such as cruise ships or oil and cargo tankers, but excludes fishing vessels of any length, unless they discharge ballast water. The new permit incorporates the Coast Guard’s mandatory ballast water management and exchange standards, and provides technology-based and water-quality-based effluent limits for other types of discharges, including deck runoff from rain or cleaning, ballast water used to stabilize ships and “gray water” from showers, sinks and laundry machines. It also establishes specific corrective actions, inspections and monitoring, recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

Earlier in the year, Congress responded to the court ruling in part by enacting a law to exempt recreational vessels from the permitting requirement and requiring further analysis and action by EPA and the Coast Guard.

[Information on the permits: epa.gov/npdes/vessels](http://epa.gov/npdes/vessels)