



MARINE SECURITY OPERATIONS BULLETIN

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MARSEC LEVEL CHANGE: STAKEHOLDER GUIDANCE AND REQUIREMENTS

This bulletin replaces MSOB 2005-001

PURPOSE

Transport Canada's (TC) marine security program is designed to ensure that Canada's transportation system remains one of the safest and most secure systems in the world. The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information and guidance to Canadian vessels, ports, and marine facilities regulated by the *Marine Transportation Security Regulations* (MTSR), and the *Domestic Ferries Security Regulations* (DFSR) on the methods by which the Minister will assess and issue a security measure raising or lowering the Marine Security (MARSEC) Level.

BACKGROUND

Operators of Canadian vessels, marine facilities and ports in Canada, subject to the MTSR and the DFSR, are to maintain MARSEC level 1 at all times unless instructed by Transport Canada to raise the MARSEC level. Under the authority of the *Marine Transportation Security Act* (MTSA) Section 2 (2), the Minister of Transport has an established process governing changes in MARSEC Level to reflect the threat environment for vessels, ports and marine facilities. The authority to raise or lower a MARSEC Level has been delegated by the Minister to other officials within Transport Canada, including the Director General, Marine Safety and Security (DG MSS).

The MTSR and DFSR provide Canada's framework for the deterrence, prevention and detection of acts that may threaten security in the marine transportation sector as well as meet Canada's obligations to implement the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code as a signatory to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The regulations detail the interpretation of each MARSEC level and the requirements of each level that must be articulated in stakeholders' approved security plans.

A change in the MARSEC level raises or lowers the intensity of safeguards in a specific geographic area or for specific vessels or facilities, as a result of a probable or imminent security threat or incident that has the potential to affect the security of the marine transportation system.

The consideration to change MARSEC levels could relate to Preventive or Responsive objectives:

- a. Generally, a Preventive Change to the MARSEC level is done when there is a heightened security risk to the marine transportation system in Canada or Canadian flagged vessels abroad. The change of MARSEC level is strictly preventive in relation to the risk. Such situations may include an incident in another mode of transportation that interfaces with a marine facility or the marine transportation system.
- b. A Responsive Change is done when there is a specific threat or event that affects or may affect the security of the marine transportation system in Canada or Canadian flagged vessels abroad.

MARSEC level requirements are legally binding on the entities outlined in the measure or notification used, and can apply to ports, facilities, Canadian and foreign flagged vessels (in Canadian or shared waters) and Canadian vessels outside of Canada. A vessel must not operate at a lower MARSEC level than that of the port or marine facility it is interfacing with.

Specific safeguards for each MARSEC Levels are included in vessel and port/facility security plans pre-approved by TC in Canada and by foreign administrations for foreign-flagged vessels.

Vessels, ports, and marine facilities that are not regulated by the MTSR and DFSR must comply with any security measures issued to them by Transport Canada, as detailed in the MTSA 7(2).

DEFINITIONS

AENFOS is the Automated Emergency Notification Fan-Out Service, system used by Transport Canada to communicate important information with Stakeholders.

Contracting Government refers to any government that is a party to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and has agreed to implement the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. These governments have specific responsibilities under the ISPS Code, which the MTSR aligns with.

CSO is the Company Security Officer.

DG MSS refers to the Director General of Marine Safety and Security at Transport Canada.

MARSEC level means the level of security requirements that is set by the Minister to reflect the threat environment for marine facilities, ports and vessels.

MARSEC level 1 means the level for which minimum security requirements are required to be implemented in accordance with the approved security plan or approved security procedures.

MARSEC level 2 means the level for which additional security requirements are required to be implemented as a result of heightened risk in accordance with the approved security plan or approved security procedures.

MARSEC level 3 means the level for which additional security requirements are required to be implemented as a result of a security threat that is probable or imminent, whether or not the specific target is identified, in accordance with the approved security plan or approved security procedures.

MSN is a Marine Security Notification issued by Transport Canada.

MTCS is the Marine Communications and Traffic Services, Canadian Coast Guard Safety and navigation-related services for vessels, boaters and fishers.

SITCEN is the Transport Canada Situation Centre also referred to as National TCSC. They may be reached at 1-888-857-4003 or 1-613-995-9737; and, by email at: SITCEN@tc.gc.ca

Stakeholder is defined as a representative from any Canadian vessel, port, marine facility, or occasional-use marine facility, certified by Transport Canada.

DIRECTIVE

MARSEC Level 1 is the security level for which minimum security procedures are maintained at all times by vessels, ports and marine facilities, as defined by the Marine Transportation Security Regulations (MTSRs)

The Director General, Marine Safety and Security, may, through the formulation of an MSN Directive or a security measure, require that Canadian flagged vessels, foreign flagged vessels in Canadian waters, as well as Canadian ports and marine facilities, regulated by the MTSR and DFSR to operate at **MARSEC Level 2** for a limited period as a result of a heightened risk of a security threat or a security incident. Evidence of a heightened risk might include, but is not limited to:



- Credible information regarding a potential threat to marine security received by Transport Canada;
- Evidence that essential vessel or facility equipment or systems, stores or cargo have been tampered with;
- Evidence that there has been unauthorized access to a marine facility;
- Information communicated through its Pre-Arrival Information (MTSR 221(1)) that indicates a vessel may pose a heightened security risk;
- A Canadian foreign policy decision that might be expected to have an effect on the security of Canada's marine transportation system;
- A developing international situation that calls for **preventive** security measures to be implemented in Canada or on board Canadian flagged vessels located outside of Canadian waters;
- A decision made by a foreign Administration or Contracting Government to raise the MARSEC level at a local or national level, or on their foreign-flagged vessels, that could have an effect on Canada's marine security interests.

The DG MSS, may, through the formulation of a MSN Directive or a security measure, require that Canadian flagged vessels, foreign flagged vessels in Canadian waters, as well as Canadian ports and marine facilities regulated by the MTSR and DFSR operate at **MARSEC Level 3** for a limited period when a security threat or security incident is probable or imminent regardless of whether the specific target is identified. Such probable or imminent risk might include, but is not limited to:

- A credible threat of an imminent act of terrorism, whether or not directed at a specific target;
- A confirmed act of terrorism, or an actual occurrence of undetermined nature believed to be a threat to the security of Canada's marine transportation system;
- Specific and credible information that unauthorized weapons, dangerous substances and devices, or equipment intended for use against persons, vessels or facilities have been found on a vessel or in a marine facility, including weapons of mass destruction;

Any requirement that the MARSEC level be set at level 2 or level 3 shall include the advice that this is an exceptional measure which will apply only for so long as the threat is imminent, or for the duration of the security incident.

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

Stakeholders should refer to the following Marine Security Operations Bulletin on AENFOS MSOB 2025-004 for guidance and requirements.

Transport
CanadaTransports
Canada

MCTS will broadcast the information, as applicable, verbally and by means of a traffic advisory, a NAVWARN, and/or a NAVAREA warning.

A vessel is only required to advise MCTS if it is unable to implement its security plan at the MARSEC Level in effect, or if they are outside Canada but not in the waters of a contracting government, in which case MCTS will notify TC SITCEN.

Canadian marine facilities also include occasional-use marine facilities (OUMF).

A Marine Facility Security Officer (MFSO) cannot require a vessel to lower its security level.

Canadian vessels and marine facilities must, in the event of an emerging threat or an actual security incident, take immediate appropriate measures without delay and not wait for a MARSEC Level change by TC. They must report the threat or incident, as well as the measures taken, to the SITCEN as soon as possible, in accordance with the provisions of MSOB 2026-002.

Once the DG MSS determines that the incident has stabilized, the same process will apply: the DG MSS will require the MARSEC Level to be lowered through the issuance of an MSN through an AENFOS notification.

Any comments, suggestions or concerns can be addressed to the Director, Marine Security Operations by e-mail at dirops.marsec-sumar@tc.gc.ca.

Aiden Ryan
Director
Marine Security Operations

**ACTIONS REQUIRED UPON A MARSEC LEVEL CHANGE**

DEPARTMENT & STAKEHOLDER	ACTIONS
Transport Canada (TC)	TC, under its Minister's Delegated Authority to Director General Marine Safety & Security, will: • issue a security measure to raise the MARSEC level through the Automated Emergency Notification Fan-Out System (AENFOS) to inform affected: TC Regional Offices; TC Security Partners and Agencies; and, Marine Industry Stakeholders: Ports, Facilities, Terminals and Vessel Company Security Officers; • Monitor the implementation and compliance status; and, • Repeat steps when it is deemed reasonably safe to return to MARSEC level 1.
Canada Coast Guard (CCG – MCTS)	Upon receipt of the AENFOS, Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) immediately broadcasts the requirement to raise the MARSEC Level to the vessels in Canadian waters within the specific geographical location.
Canadian Ports and Marine Facilities	Upon receipt of the AENFOS notification, ports and facilities will: • Acknowledge receipt of the AENFOS notification by following its instructions; • Implement their Security Plan under the appropriate MARSEC Level; and, • Confirm their compliance or non-compliance to the appropriate MARSEC Level as per MTSR 324(1)(b), as soon as possible and no longer than 12 hours from when the AENFOS notification was sent, to TC Regional Point of Contact and SITCEN.
Canadian Flagged Vessels in Canadian Waters	Upon MCTS broadcast vessels will: • Implement their Security Plan under the appropriate MARSEC level; • Notify MCTS if unable to comply, as per Section 219 of the MTSR; in which case, MCTS will report the non-compliance to TC SITCEN. • Brief all vessel personnel on identified security threats, emphasize reporting

**Annex A**

	procedures and stress the need for increased vigilance.
Domestic Ferries and Ferry Facilities/Terminals	Upon receipt of the AENFOS notification, Ferry Operators shall: • Ensure that the ferries, and ferry facilities/terminals are in compliance with the increased MARSEC level without undue delay; • Report any implementation difficulties to MCTS and TC as soon as possible (see Annex A); and, • Brief all ferry facilities/terminals personnel on identified security threats, emphasizing reporting procedures and duties and stressing the need for increased vigilance to TC SITCEN and Regional Point of Contact.
Foreign Flagged Vessels Operating In – Or – Entering Canadian Waters	Upon notification of a MARSEC Level change and before the vessel interfaces with a marine facility, the operator shall: • Implement their Security Plan under the appropriate MARSEC level; • Notify MCTS if unable to comply, as per Section 219 of the MTSR; in which case, MCTS will report the non-compliance to TC SITCEN. • Brief all vessel personnel on identified security threats, emphasize reporting procedures and stress the need for increased vigilance. If there has been a change in the MARSEC level from that reported in the pre-arrival information (PAIR) to TC, the Master of a Foreign Flagged Vessel shall: • Immediately notify a Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre of the Canadian Coast Guard. • Ensure that the change is reported to the Minister in accordance with the instructions set out in the most recent edition of the Canadian Coast Guard publication entitled Radio Aides to Marine Navigation, sub-section Pre-Arrival Information Report;

**Annex A**

	• Not enter Canadian waters unless the change has been reported to the Minister; and, • In the case of a change that has occurred after the vessel has entered Canadian waters, that the change is reported to the Minister before the vessel's first interface with a marine facility in Canada. Masters of vessels subject to the MTSR failing to submit, or submitting incomplete or inaccurate pre-arrival information, risk subjecting their vessel to control actions such as, but not limited to: inspection, detention, redirection or expulsion from Canadian waters. The Master may also be subject to administrative monetary penalty should regulatory requirements not be satisfied.
Canadian Flagged Vessels Located Outside of Canadian Waters	Upon notification of a MARSEC Level change via <u>AENFOS</u>, the <u>Company Security Officer (CSO)</u> shall: • Acknowledge reception of the MARSEC Level change notification • Notify the Masters of Canadian Flagged Vessels of the MARSEC Level change requirements and inform them of the anticipated duration, if this information is available; • Notify the relevant maritime authority of the contracting government; and, if in other waters notify the Minister by contacting TCSC. • Request that the Masters of Canadian Flagged Vessels implement the current MARSEC Level posture and declare it in the PAIR, upon re-entry into Canadian waters, or resubmit if a previous PAIR was sent; • Confirm that the Masters of Canadian Flagged Vessels have been notified.

**ANNEX B****EMAIL TEMPLATE**

INSERT MSN TEMPLATE WHICH CONTAINS A COMPLIANCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**COMPLIANCE OR IMPLEMENTATION DIFFICULTIES:
MARSEC LEVEL CHANGE NOTIFICATION EMAIL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Subject:	Compliance Acknowledgement or Implementation Difficulties
To:	Regional Point of Contact(s)
cc:	SITCEN@tc.gc.ca
Name of the Vessel, Canadian Port or Marine Facility:	
Confirmation of MARSEC level change:	
Time and Date of Compliance:	
Compliance Difficulties Detailed:	