



SHIP SAFETY BULLETIN

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Subject: Now in force: Discharge requirements for cruise ships

This Ship Safety Bulletin (SSB) replaces [SSB 10/2025](#) issued on June 12, 2025.

Purpose

This bulletin describes the sewage and greywater discharge requirements for cruise ships in Canadian waters.

These requirements are listed in the [Interim Order No. 4 Respecting the Discharge of Sewage and the Release of Greywater by Cruise Ships in Canadian Waters](#) which came into force on June 11, 2026.

Scope

This bulletin applies to Authorized Representatives (AR) for cruise ships certified to carry more than 100 people, have overnight accommodations, and are either:

- Canadian vessels, or
- foreign vessels that operate in waters under Canadian jurisdiction.

Background

Transport Canada introduced voluntary sewage and greywater discharge measures for cruise ships in 2022.

Transport Canada worked with the cruise industry to develop new permanent measures in 2023, which will continue from June 2026 to June 2027. These measures will help restore marine habitats and further protect Canadian waters from vessel sourced pollution.

Keywords:

1. Cruise Ships
2. Sewage
3. Greywater

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The measures have been implemented through an interim order, which has the same effect as a regulation but takes effect immediately while we go through the longer process of creating new regulations.

For this bulletin **sewage** means:

- human body wastes (urine, feces, etc.) and wastes from living animals
- drainage and other wastes from toilets and other receptacles made to receive or store human body wastes
- drainage from medical premises like a dispensary or a sick bay via wash basins, wash tubs and scuppers
- drainage from spaces with living animals, and
- other drainage or wastes when mixed with the drainage or other wastes listed above

Greywater is used water from sinks, laundry machines, bathtubs, shower-stalls or dishwashers. It does not include sewage, or drainage from machinery spaces or workshops.

What you need to know

The requirements have not changed since 2023. Cruise ships must:

- not discharge greywater and sewage within at least 3 nautical miles from shore, an ice-shelf, or fast ice anywhere in Canada
- treat greywater with sewage when discharging between 3 and 12 nautical miles from shore south of 60 North. The discharge must not contain solids, leave a sheen, or discolour the water, or leave any residue on nearby shorelines, and
- treat sewage with an approved marine sanitation device when discharging 3 to 12 nautical miles from shore, an ice-shelf, or fast ice anywhere in Canada. The discharge must:
 - have a fecal coliform count that is equal to or less than 14/100 milliliters
 - not contain solids, leave a sheen, or discolor the water, or leave any residue on nearby shorelines, and
 - not leave sewage sludge or residue beneath the surface of the water or on nearby shorelines.

In addition to these measures, Canada also requires ships to comply with requirements in the [International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships](#) (MARPOL). These international requirements are implemented in Canada through various laws and regulations including the [Vessel Pollution and Dangerous Chemical Regulations](#) and the [Arctic Shipping Safety and Pollution Prevention Regulations](#).

Reporting and record keeping

As the Authorized Representative of a cruise ship, you must report the release of sewage or greywater to a Marine Safety Inspector when the release is needed to:

- save lives
- secure the ship's safety
- avoid losing the ship, or
- when it occurs due to an accident that damages equipment.

This report must be done as soon as it occurs or is expected to occur, or as soon as possible when the release is done.

Whenever the ship discharges or releases sewage or greywater in Canadian waters you must make sure to record the information in a record book. This record must include the reasons and circumstances for the discharge or release, and the entry must be signed by the officer in charge of the release or discharge.

You can use either paper or electronic records. You can keep separate books for sewage and greywater, or you could keep both in a single book. Record books must be written in English or French.

In the record book:

- operations are to be recorded in chronological order as soon as they are executed on board
- every entry must be dated and signed by the officer or officers-in-charge of the operations concerned.
- every completed page must be signed by the ship's Master
- do not leave any blank lines between entries
- if you make a mistake when completing an entry, cross it out using a single line so that it can still be read. Sign and date the wrong entry and start a new entry immediately below it.

The ship must keep the record book on board for 2 years after the date of last entry.

The record book **must** include:

- row/entries numbering
- date (yyyy/mm/dd) when the discharge started
- date (yyyy/mm/dd) when the discharge stopped
- time the discharge started
- time the discharge stopped
- tank(s) discharged
- type of discharge (sewage, greywater, mix of sewage and greywater)
- whether the discharge was treated (YES/NO)
- ship's draft (Meter) during discharge
- ship's minimum speed (Kts) during discharge
- ship's positions at the time of discharge by either:

- latitude and longitude when the discharge started and stopped, or
- the name and location of each discharge port or reception facility
- distance from shore, ice shelf or fast ice (in NM) or discharge to a reception facility
- discharging hours
- volume discharged (in cubic meters)
- actual flow rate of discharge (cubic meter/hour)
- signature of the Officer-in-Charge, their name and rank

Inspections

Transport Canada is responsible for carrying out compliance and enforcement activities related to pollution prevention. This involves inspecting Canadian and foreign vessels in Canadian waters to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and standards.

Should any deficiencies be revealed, Transport Canada marine inspectors are guided by the [*Canada Shipping Act, 2001*](#) and its regulations. Appropriate compliance and enforcement action is taken to ensure that vessels are brought into compliance with the applicable requirements.

If asked, you must provide all relevant discharge information to our inspectors.

Compliance and enforcement

If you do not comply with this Interim Order, you can:

- face administrative monetary penalties up to \$250,000 CAD, and/or
- be liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to \$1,000,000 and/or
- be sent to prison for up to 18 months.

Exceptions

In some specific cases, cruise ships may discharge sewage or greywater. In all these cases, sewage and greywater discharges must still be treated using an approved marine sanitation device as required by the [*Vessel Pollution and Dangerous Chemicals Regulations*](#).

A ship can discharge sewage and greywater:

- when travelling where the distance between any shore is less than 6 nautical miles across, and the ship cannot hold the discharge until entering wider waterways
- when not equipped with adequate holding tank capacity (in other words, the cruise ship is not fitted with a holding tank(s) that can hold the amount of sewage and greywater expected during the ship's intended voyage)
- when travelling in an area where there is no onshore reception facility available and able to receive sewage and greywater in an environmentally safe way during the ship's intended voyage

If a cruise ship is not equipped to treat greywater along with sewage using an approved marine sanitation device as this interim order comes into effect, it can discharge greywater between 3 and 12 nautical miles from shore south of 60.

A cruise ship can also discharge greywater and sewage when it occurs due to an accident that damages equipment or when it is done to:

- save lives
- secure the ship's safety
- avoid losing the ship.

Operational testing

As the Authorized Representative of a cruise ship, you must make sure to test effluent samples according to the Standard Methods unless the system is fitted with instruments that indicate the performance of the device by providing an automatic continuous record while the device is in use.

Shipboard documents

A cruise ship must hold and keep on board valid:

- International Sewage Pollution Prevention Certificate in the form set out in the appendix to Annex IV of MARPOL;
- certificate of compliance if the cruise ship is entitled to fly the flag of a state that is not a party to Annex IV of MARPOL; and
- certificate of type approval by the administration for a marine sanitation device.

Table 1: Summary of discharge regulatory measure for cruise ships

Substance and distance from shore	Regulatory Measures¹
Discharge of treated sewage within 3 nautical miles from shore	Cruise ships certified to carry more than 100 persons and equipped with overnight accommodations must not discharge treated sewage within 3 nm from shore, an ice-shelf or fast ice.
Discharge of treated sewage between 3 and 12 nautical miles from shore	Cruise ships certified to carry more than 100 persons and equipped with overnight accommodations must use an approved sewage treatment device capable of treatment to fecal coliform counts equal to or less than 14/100 ml before discharging between 3 and 12 nm from shore, an ice-shelf or fast ice. The discharge must not contain any visible solids and must not cause a film or sheen on the water, discoloration of the water or its shorelines or sewage sludge or an emulsion to be deposited beneath the surface of the water or on its shorelines. Additionally, the discharge is made as far as feasible from areas of ice concentration exceeding 1/10; and in the case of a discharge made in arctic waters, it is made at a moderate rate while the cruise ship is en route at a speed of at least four knots.
Discharge of greywater within 3 nautical miles from shore	Cruise ships certified to carry more than 100 persons and equipped with overnight accommodations must not discharge greywater within 3 nm from shore, an ice-shelf or fast ice.
Discharge of greywater between 3 and 12 nautical miles from shore	Cruise ships certified to carry more than 100 persons and equipped with overnight accommodations must treat greywater together with sewage before discharging between 3 and 12 nm from shore to the greatest extent possible. Any release of greywater must not result in the deposit of solids in the water or leave a sheen on the water, discoloration of the water or its shorelines, or an emulsion to be deposited beneath the surface of the water or on its shorelines.

¹ This Table includes a summary of applicable requirements. For detailed information please refer to the [Vessel Pollution and Dangerous Chemical Regulations](#) and the [Arctic Shipping Safety and Pollution Prevention Regulations](#).