

Tough Global Limits Imposed on Air Pollution from Large Ships

LONDON, UK, October 13, 2008 (ENS) - Regulations to reduce harmful air emissions from large ocean-going ships were unanimously adopted Friday by the International Maritime Organization, the United Nations specialized agency responsible for improving maritime safety and preventing pollution from ships.

Effective as of July 1, 2010, the new plan will require ships to use low sulfur fuel in designated Emission Control Areas - first reducing permissible sulfur levels to 1.0 percent in 2010 and then dropping the permissible sulfur level to 0.1 percent in 2015.

By 2020, ships will be required to use fuel with no more than 5,000 ppm sulfur, a 90 percent reduction from today's global cap.

This is an Emission Control Area sulfur level advocated by California, the U.S. government, the European Commission and others to address air quality issues in near-shore population centers.

Nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, or soot, also will be more strictly controlled.

New engine standards will cut NOx emissions by 20 percent and will apply to new engines and to existing engines, as certified low-emission kits become available, beginning in 2011.

Speaking following adoption of the MARPOL Annex VI amendments, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos hailed the achievement as "a monumental decision in IMO's history, a decision that proves, once again, that the organization is focused, united and relevant as the international body capable of dealing with all items on its agenda, an organization that sets global standards in a global environment."

The revised measures are expected to have a significant beneficial impact on the atmospheric environment and on human health, particularly the health of people living in port cities and coastal communities.

The World Shipping Council, representing over 90 percent of the global shipping capacity, supports the issuance, ratification and implementation of the IMO's new international vessel air emissions standards established by the International Maritime Organization.

"From Los Angeles to Hamburg to Tokyo, the liner shipping industry has recognized the need for new, environmentally effective, international regulations for vessel air emissions, particularly SOx, NOx and particulate matter emissions," the World Shipping Council said in an April statement after the new regulations were outlined by the IMO.

The World Shipping Council and its liner shipping member companies endorsed the U.S. government's proposal



A cargo vessel enters the Port of New York and New Jersey (Photo courtesy [World Shipping Council](#))

on this subject to the IMO in June 2007.

The U.S. government proposal also received the endorsement of the California Air Resources Board, a number of U.S. environmental interests, the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, the American Association of Port Authorities, and various individual ports concerned about vessel air emissions.

The main changes to the MARPOL Annex VI Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships agreed by the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee will see a progressive reduction in sulfur oxide, SO_x, emissions from ships, with the global sulfur cap reduced initially to 3.50 percent, from the current 4.50 percent, effective from January 1, 2012.

Then the sulfur cap will be progressively reduced to 0.50 percent, effective from January 1, 2020, subject to a feasibility review to be completed no later than 2018.



A cargo vessel passes under San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge. (Photo courtesy World Shipping Council)

The limits in sulfur Emission Control Areas will be reduced to 1.00 percent, beginning on July 1, 2010, from the current 1.50 percent, and will be further reduced to 0.10 percent, effective from January 1, 2015.

Progressive reductions in nitrogen oxide, NO_x, emissions from marine engines were also agreed, with the most stringent controls on engines installed on ships constructed on or after January 1, 2016, operating in Emission Control Areas.

The new regulations will allow for an Emission Control Area to be designated for SO_x and particulate matter, or NO_x, or all three types of emissions from ships, subject to a proposal from an IMO member country.

The proposal would be considered for adoption by the IMO, if supported by a demonstrated need to prevent, reduce and control one or all three of those emissions from ships.

In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency will submit an application to the IMO for sulfur Emission Control Area status for U.S. coastal areas, the agency said in a statement Friday.

Ocean-going vessels dock at over 100 U.S. ports. The EPA says more than 40 of these ports are in metropolitan areas that do not meet federal air quality standards.

"Massive reductions in air pollution from these large ships will help 87 million Americans living in areas around ports that don't meet air quality standards breathe cleaner air," said Margo Oge, director of the EPA Office of Transportation and Air Quality. "Pollution emitted by ships along the U.S. coastlines and waterways can move inland where it worsens air quality."

The EPA now will advance a domestic rulemaking action under the Clean Air Act to implement the new IMO standards.

When fully implemented, the new standards will help reduce harmful emissions by 80 percent or more from large diesel ships, including those that are foreign-flagged operating in U.S. waters