

Wastewater requirements for vessels on inland waters

Updated March 2016¹

EPA 711/16: This information sheet summarises the requirements of the 2008 Code of practice for vessel and facility management (marine and inland waters), specifically the grey water requirements for owners and operators of inland vessels.

Introduction

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is satisfied that reasonable and practical opportunities exist for vessel operators to provide on-board wastewater management for the vessel and its operational requirements in South Australia's inland waters. It is a requirement that operators minimise their environmental impacts—in particular, grey water discharges. Wastewater management will reduce the environmental and public health risks associated with discharging a vessel's grey water into South Australia's aquatic environments.

Through the release of its grey water, a vessel can cause significant harm, especially in sensitive aquatic areas. Furthermore, increasing numbers of houseboats with ensuites, spas, dishwashers and washing machines moored alongside one another on the River Murray can pose health risks, both to those on board and other recreational river users through the discharge of grey water. For example, water extracted from the River Murray is often only filtered for use in the kitchen sink; in many cases the water used for washing, showers and spas is taken directly from the River Murray and may therefore contain pollutants released by an adjacent vessel, or even one's own.

Code of practice

The [Code of practice for vessel and facility management \(marine and inland waters\)](#) is linked to the *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2015*, and supersedes the *Code of practice for vessels on inland waters* (2003). It contains mandatory requirements for vessel operators managing black water (toilet wastes) and grey water (wastewater that has been used for washing, laundering, bathing or showering).

The code requires that vessels travelling on inland waters must retain all black water on board, and presents a range of options available for the management of grey water, depending on the size of the vessel and the manner in which it is used.

¹ Updated according to *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2015*.

The code introduces the following options to manage grey water output and reduce the likelihood of environmental harm:

Vessels deemed to be structurally impractical or impossible to install a containment or treatment system (e.g. trailer-sailors and cruisers), are required to:

- install a grease trap (or equivalent) for galley waste , and an in-line strainer where practical
- install in-line strainers for all other grey water production facilities
- adopt environmentally friendly practices (e.g. use low-flow shower heads, environmentally friendly detergents).

Vessels, where it is structurally practical to install a containment or treatment system (e.g. small houseboats and larger cruisers), are required to:

- contain all galley waste (it is suitable to store galley waste in an existing blackwater tank)
- treat or contain all remaining greywater (shower, laundry and hand basin) with an approved treatment system or holding tank
- adopt environmentally friendly practices (e.g. use low-flow shower heads, environmentally friendly detergents).

Commercial vessels and private vessels which are permanently occupied or have grey water production facilities (i.e. dishwasher, washing machine, galleys, hand-basins or showers)

- **contain** (installation of a containment device for disposal into a land-based vessel wastewater collection facility- commonly known as 'pump out stations') or **treat** (installation of a grey water treatment system which can provide treatment to standards acceptable for freshwater discharge) all grey water
- adopt environmentally friendly practices (e.g. use low-flow shower heads, environmentally friendly detergents).

Implementation and enforcement

The EPA has developed and implemented a compliance and enforcement strategy for the [code of practice](#). This strategy includes public awareness, education, voluntary and regulatory compliance, and enforcement strategies to ensure that compliance is met using a reasonable and practical approach.

Vessels will be subject to inspection regimes for compliance with blackwater and grey water requirements and may be subject to enforcement where compliance is not being met.

Mandatory provisions of this [code of practice](#) may be enforced on vessel owners and operators in the following ways:

- by issuing an Environment Protection Order (EPO) to gain compliance with the policy
- by issuing an expiation notice (on-the-spot fine) of \$300 for a breach of a mandatory provision
- by issuing an EPO as well as an on-the-spot fine for a breach of a mandatory provision
- by issuing an on-the-spot fine for failing to comply with an EPO, or
- by prosecuting through the court (maximum penalty \$250,000).

Officers from the EPA, local councils, and other government authorities are authorised to enforce the Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy.

Further reading

The EPA provides a series of publications to assist vessel owners with understanding the requirements of the new code of practice.

Owners and operators of vessels on inland waters should obtain a copy of the code of practice and other EPA publications, including:

- EPA Guideline: [Managing vessel wastewater for black and/or grey water](#) (2009)
- EPA Information: [Flow chart for minimum grey water requirements for vessels on inland waters](#) (2011)

These documents are available for download from www.epa.sa.gov.au or by contacting the EPA.

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

Further information

Legislation

[Online legislation](#) is freely available. Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet
Adelaide Service SA Centre
108 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909
Website: shop.service.sa.gov.au
Email: ServiceSAcustomerservice@sa.gov.au

General information

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