

EPA Information

Wastewater requirements for vessels on inland waters

Updated July 2008

EPA 711/08: This information sheet summarises the requirements of the Draft Code of Practice for Vessel and Facility Management: Marine and Inland Waters, specifically the new greywater 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 onboard wastewater management systems suitable for the vessel and its operational requirements in South Australia's inland waters. It is imperative that operators look towards minimising their environmental impacts—in particular, greywater discharges. This will reduce the environmental and public health risks associated with discharging a vessel's greywater into South Australia's aquatic environments.

Through the release of its greywater, a vessel can cause significant harm, especially in sensitive aquatic areas. Further, 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 greywater. 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 *Draft Code of Practice for Vessel and Facility Management: Marine and Inland Waters*, will be linked to the *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003*, 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 greywater (wastewater that has been used for washing, laundering, bathing or showering).

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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 greywater, depending on the size of the vessel and the manner in which it is used.

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

Vessels with kitchen sink(s), hand or washbasins:

- onboard retainment (installation of a retainment device for disposal into land-based waste management systems), or
- onboard treatment (installation of a greywater treatment system which can provide treatment to standards acceptable for freshwater discharge), or
- installation of an in-line filter or strainer (only applicable for specific cases where the above options cannot be structurally supported by the vessel) , or
- changes in behavioural management (only in cases where there are no means of employing structural controls on board the vessel).

Vessels with dishwasher(s), washing machine(s), spa(s) and some showers:

- onboard retainment (installation of a retainment device for disposal into land-based waste management systems), or
- onboard treatment (installation of a greywater treatment system which can provide treatment to standards acceptable for freshwater discharge).

For the management of greywater, vessel operators are required to observe the following compliance dates:

- 1 January 2009 for all newly constructed vessels
- 1 January 2010 for existing commercial vessels in survey and those that are permanently occupied
- 1 January 2011 for all other vessels.

Owners and operators of vessels on inland waters should obtain a complete copy of the code of practice and other relevant information (including the EPA Guideline—*Managing vessel wastewaters*), by using the contacts listed at the end of this information sheet or the EPA website <www.epa.sa.gov.au>.

Implementation and enforcement

The EPA is currently preparing an implementation strategy for the release of the code. This strategy includes public awareness, education, voluntary and regulatory compliance and enforcement strategies to ensure that the timeframes developed in this Code of Practice are met.

Vessels will be subject to inspection regimes for compliance with black and greywater requirements and may be subject to enforcement where compliance is not being met. Vessel operators who are experiencing difficulties with achieving compliance by the stated deadlines should notify the EPA in writing as soon as is reasonably practical, by clearly outlining the circumstances that will result in the non-compliance.

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 \$30,000).

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

FURTHER INFORMATION

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the internet at: <www.legislation.sa.gov.au>

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet 101 Grenfell Street Adelaide SA 5000	Telephone: 13 23 24 Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909 Internet: < shop.service.sa.gov.au > Email: < servicesa@saugov.sa.gov.au >
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For general information please contact:

Environment Protection Authority GPO Box 2607 Adelaide SA 5001	Telephone: (08) 8204 2004 Facsimile: (08) 8124 4670 Freecall (country): 1800 623 445 Internet: < www.epa.sa.gov.au > E-mail: < epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au >
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