



Maritime Authority bans discharge of wash water from open-loop



Thomas Alonsi

The Ghana Maritime Authority (GMA) has alerted all ship owners, operators, managers, port operators and the shipping community that the discharge of wash water from open-loop exhaust gas scrubbers in Ghanaian ports and territorial seas is prohibited.

In a communique signed by the Director-General of the GMA, Thomas Alonsi and copied to the B&FT, it said: “By this Notice, vessels fitted with open-loop scrubbers calling at Ghana are to use compliant fuels while vessels fitted with hybrid scrubbers are required to switch to the closed-loop mode of operation. This measure is to protect the marine environment and ensure that our ports and territorial waters are clean.”

Talks on this have been ongoing since last year when environmental authorities around the world raised an alarm about negative environmental effect of the development.

Background

An open-loop scrubber uses seawater as the medium for cleaning or scrubbing the exhaust. The use of exhaust gas cleaning systems has split the shipping industry as they are an accepted equivalent measure in complying with the IMO 2020 global sulphur cap.

Seawater is normally supplied by a dedicated pump. CO₂ dissolves in seawater forming carbonic acid, bicarbonate or carbonate ions depending on the pH. In a closed loop-type scrubber, meanwhile, treated water is circulated through the scrubber to keep the scrubbing process independent of the chemistry of the waters through which the vessel is sailing.

As a result, vessels operating an open-loop scrubber will have to switch to compliant fuels when entering Ghana’s waters.

This Notice by the GMA is in line with Maritime Circular (Shipping Notice No. 012) issued by the Ghana Maritime Authority with regards to Regulation 14.1.3 of MARPOL Annex VI on the sulphur content of fuel oil used onboard ships not exceeding 0.50% m/m.

The Notice was issued in accordance with section 479 A of the Ghana Shipping (Amendment) Act, 2011(Act 826), which mandates the Authority to issue Maritime Circulars for the purpose of disseminating relevant information on maritime safety, security, marine pollution prevention and other relevant maritime matters.

By this Notice, all Ship Owners, Ship Operators, Managers, Port Operators, and the Shipping Community are required to comply accordingly. The notice emphasized that: “Ghana as a party to MARPOL Annex VI, is taking the necessary steps to provide adequate reception facilities for the collection of residues generated from the operation of scrubbers.”

List of banned countries

With this notice, Ghana has joined the growing list of countries taking action against open-loop scrubbers, including China (territorial waters), Singapore (within port limits), Malaysia (territorial waters), Pakistan (within port limits) UAE (Fujairah and Abu Dhabi port limits), Bahrain (within port limits).

The others are Egypt (Suez Canal), Gibraltar (local waters), Spain (port of Algeciras), Portugal (port waters), France (certain ports), Belgium (ports and inland waters), Ireland (port waters in Cork, Dublin and Waterford), Scotland (ports on the Forth and Tay), Norway (heritage fjords).

Also, Sweden (port of Brofjorden), Germany (seaports adjacent to inland waterways and inland waterways), Lithuania (port waters) Bermuda (territorial waters), Panama (the Panama Canal) and the USA (Connecticut port waters and Californian waters) are among the list.

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