

Mediterranean countries agree on voluntary interim ballast water management regulations

The Ballast Water Management Convention (BWM Convention) was adopted in 2004 and will enter into force 12 months after the date on which not less than 30 States, the combined merchant fleets of which constitutes not less than 35% of the gross tonnage of the world merchant shipping, have ratified it. As of December 2011, 32 States have ratified the Convention, the last two States acceding to the Convention being Montenegro and Lebanon, but the current contracting parties still represent only 26.46% of the world tonnage. The Convention status can be followed on the IMO webpage covering [Ballast Water Management](#)¹.

In anticipation of the entry into force of the BWM Convention, the Mediterranean Coastal States have adopted interim arrangements to address the risk of invasion by alien species via ships' ballast water and sediment within their areas. The "*Harmonized voluntary arrangements for ballast water management in the Mediterranean region*" ([IMO BWM.2/Circ 35](#)) require ships sailing in the Mediterranean to exchange their ballast water in accordance with the requirements set out in the D-1 Standard of the BWM Convention. These arrangements are of a voluntary and interim nature and were implemented on **1 January 2012**. The arrangements will be in force until the date the BWM Convention enters into force.

According to the adopted arrangements for BWM in the Mediterranean region:

- Every vessel calling at a port within the Mediterranean Sea area is required to have on board a Ballast Water Management Plan (Plan) complying with the requirements of the "*Guidelines for Ballast Water Management and Development of Ballast water Management Plans*" (IMO Resolution MEPC.127(53)) and to keep a record of all ballast water operations carried out. The Plan shall be specific to each ship and shall provide detailed procedures and descriptions of all the actions to be taken in order to implement the BWM practices required by the Convention. The Plan should also identify the officer in charge of ballast water management and outline his/her duties in order to ensure that the procedures in the Plan are followed.
- Sediments collected during cleaning or repair of ballast tanks should be delivered to appropriate reception facilities in ports and terminals, or be discharged more than 200 nautical miles from the nearest land when the ship is sailing in the Mediterranean Sea area.
- Ballast water exchange procedures:

Trade/Operation:	Where to undertake ballast water exchange:
(i) Ships entering or leaving the waters of the Mediterranean Sea area from or to the Atlantic Ocean (Straits of Gibraltar), or from or to the Indian Ocean through the Red Sea (Suez Canal)	Before entering or after leaving the Mediterranean Sea area; at least 200 nautical miles from the nearest land and in waters at least 200 meters in depth
(ii) Ships in situations not allowing for ballast water exchange as described in (i) above, e.g. to avoid delays or deviations from a ship's intended voyage or for safety reasons	Before entering or after leaving the Mediterranean Sea area; as far from the nearest land as possible, and in all cases in waters at least 50 nautical miles from the nearest land and in waters of at least 200 meters depth
(iii) Ships engaged in traffic between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ports located within the Mediterranean Sea area; or • a port located in the Black Sea area and a port located in the Red Sea area; or • a port located in the Black Sea area and a port located in the Mediterranean Sea area; or • a port located in the Red Sea area and a port located in the Mediterranean Sea area 	As far from the nearest land as possible, and in all cases in waters at least 50 nautical miles from the nearest land and in waters of at least 200 meters depth
(iv) Ships in situations not allowing for ballast water exchange as described in (iii) above, e.g. to avoid delays or deviations from a ship's intended voyage or for safety reasons	Areas designated by the port State for that purpose

Although the arrangements are of a voluntary and interim nature, Gard recommends Members and Clients operating in the Mediterranean region to carefully review the new requirements and, as far as practicably possible, to implement these requirements in the onboard procedures.

¹ See also article "[Ballast water regulations - Pending entry into force of the Ballast Water Management Convention](#)" in Gard News issue No. 202.