

Discharge and disposal of dry cargo residues – U.S. Coast Guard Regulations for the Great Lakes Region

For many years, the U.S. Coast Guard has tolerated the sweeping overboard of dry cargo residues (known as 'sweepings' or 'DCR'), produced during the loading or discharging of bulk cargoes. This issue mainly involves ships carrying ore and mineral cargoes in the Great Lakes region. However, environmental groups have recently focused on this phenomenon, and have pushed for regulation and/or banning of the practice. It has been reported that an estimated one million pounds of such waste material is swept into the Great Lakes each year.

On 29 September 2008 the USCG published a set of interim rules for the discharge of such residues in the Great Lakes, with the period allowing for public comment before finalising the rules, to run to 15 January 2009.

These regulations permit the continued sweeping overboard of such debris in most circumstances, but with certain limitations and controls. Such discharges are now prohibited in certain sensitive and protected areas where they had previously been allowed, and the new rules provide for new recordkeeping and reporting requirements. In these Rules, the Coast Guard also discusses proposed voluntary measures to reduce the disposal of dry cargo residues and minimise their impact on the environment.

These new regulations can be found in the Federal Register at:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-22670.pdf>

It would appear that the most time consuming of the new requirements will be the recordkeeping and reporting. Ships will be required to keep a DCR Log, with entries for cargo loaded and unloaded, how and how much sweeping takes place and what measures, if any, were taken to control or mitigate the residues. These records must be kept onboard the ship for at least 2 years, and copies must be forwarded to the U.S. Coast Guard quarterly, by e-mail, fax or post. Records must be kept on Coast Guard Form CG-33, which can be found, along with reporting address and other details, online on the U.S. Coast Guard's webpage at:

http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/CG522/cg5224/dry_cargo.asp

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