



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 363 of 07th September 2016

To:	All Surveyors/Auditors
Applicable to flag:	All Flags
Subject:	IMO's BWM Convention to Enter Into Force on 8 September 2017
Reference:	BWM

IMO's BWM Convention to Enter Into Force on 8 September 2017

With the "accession" of the International Ballast Water Management Convention by Finland IMO reports that the remaining condition (35% of the world's gross tonnage) for entry into force has been met and therefore the BWM Convention is to enter into force on 8 September 2017. IMO has approved draft amendments to the Convention's implementation scheme and if adopted (scheduled for MEPC 70 in October 2016), then approved ballast water treatment systems meeting the D-2 biological standard will need to be installed on:

- new ships - constructed on/after 8 September 2017; and
- existing ships - not later than the first MARPOL IOPP Renewal Survey carried out on/after 8 September 2017.

The ballast water problem

Ballast water is routinely taken on by ships for stability and structural integrity. It can contain thousands of aquatic microbes, algae and animals, which are then carried across the world's oceans and released into ecosystems where they are not native.

Untreated ballast water released at a ship's destination could potentially introduce a new invasive aquatic species. Expanded ship trade and traffic volume over the last few decades has increased the likelihood of invasive species being released. Hundreds of invasions have already taken place, sometimes with devastating consequences for the local ecosystem.

The Ballast Water Management Convention will require all ships in international trade to manage their ballast water and sediments to certain standards, according to a ship-specific ballast water management plan. All ships will also have to carry a ballast water record book and an

Customer Service Center

5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
E-Mail:

joel@conarinagroup.com

Technical Head Office

7111 Dekadine Ct.
Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (832) 451 0185,
1 (713) 204 6380

E-Mail: cbozenovici@vcmaritime.com

International Ballast Water Management Certificate. The ballast water performance standard will be phased in over a period of time. Most ships will need to install an on-board system to treat ballast water and eliminate unwanted organisms. More than 60 type-approved systems are already available.

IMO has worked extensively with the development of guidelines for the uniform implementation of the Convention and to address concerns of various stakeholders, such as with regards to the availability of ballast water management systems and their type approval and testing.

Shipboard ballast water management systems must be approved by national authorities, according to a process developed by IMO. Ballast water management systems have to be tested in a land-based facility and on board ships to prove that they meet the performance standard set out in the treaty. These could, for example, include systems which make use of filters and ultra violet light or electrochlorination.

Ballast water management systems which make use of active substances must undergo a strict approval procedure and be verified by IMO. There is a two-tier process, in order to ensure that the ballast water management system does not pose unreasonable risk to ship safety, human health and the aquatic environment.

Examples of invasive species

-The North American comb jelly (*Mnemiopsis leidyi*) has travelled in ships' ballast water from the eastern seaboard of the Americas e.g. to the Black, Azov and Caspian Seas. It depletes zooplankton stocks; altering food web and ecosystem function. The species has contributed significantly to the collapse of Azov Sea, Black Sea and Caspian Sea fisheries in the 1990s and 2000s, with massive economic and social impact.

-The Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) has been transported from the Black Sea to western and northern Europe, including Ireland and the Baltic Sea, and the eastern half of North America. Travelling in larval form in ballast water, on release it has rapid reproductive growth with no natural predators in North America. The mussel multiplies and fouls all available hard surfaces in mass numbers. Displacing native aquatic life, this species alters habitat, ecosystem and the food web and causes severe fouling problems on infrastructure and vessels. There have been high economic costs involved in unblocking water intake pipes, sluices and irrigation ditches.

-The North Pacific seastar (*Asterias amurensis*) has been transported in ballast water from the northern Pacific to southern Australia. It reproduces in large numbers, reaching 'plague' proportions rapidly in invaded environments. This invasive species has caused significant economic loss as it feeds on shellfish, including commercially valuable scallop, oyster and clam species.

Courtesy of CONARINA

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Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (832) 451 0185,
1 (713) 204 6380

E-Mail: cbozenovici@vcmaritime.com

REFERENCES:

- **BWM Convention**

ATTACHMENTS: No.

Kindest Regards,
Cosmin Bozenovici
Naval Architect – Conarina Technical Head Office

Customer Service Center

5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
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