

Reminder: Ballast water exchange requirements as of September 2017

The IMO Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention has entered into force as of 8 September 2017. From this date, all newbuilds must have ballast water treatment systems installed at delivery. While existing vessels have longer to install treatment systems, they will need to perform ballast water exchange until they do.

No ballast water treatment system = ballast water exchange

If your vessel does not have a ballast water treatment system installed, you now need to perform ballast water exchange. This is required by Regulation B-4 of the BWM Convention. You must perform the procedure at least 200 nautical miles from land and in waters at least 200 metres in depth, achieving a 95% volumetric exchange in accordance with Regulation D-1.

The only way to avoid performing ballast water exchange is to install a type-approved ballast water treatment system.

Ballast water exchange is an interim measure

Ballast water exchange is a temporary solution with risks for your vessel and limited biological efficiency. In the coming years, it will be phased out in favour of ballast water treatment.

According to Regulation B-3 of the BWM Convention, existing vessels in general must have a ballast water treatment system retrofitted by their first IOPP renewal after 8 September 2019. The system needs to be type approved in accordance with Regulation D-2.

After this IOPP survey, ballast water exchange will no longer provide compliance.

You must have a Ballast Water Management Plan

As of 8 September 2017, your vessel also requires a Ballast Water Management Plan, regardless of your compliance method. This will ensure that you can meet the reporting requirements of Port State Authorities.

The plan is a comprehensive document comprising rules, procedures, crew responsibilities, ballast water exchange locations, sampling requirements and more. Full details can be found in the IMO G4 guideline.

Without a Ballast Water Management plan, you risk operational delays and possible fines if you cannot prove compliance.

If you sail in United States waters

The United States has its own requirements for ballast water management. If you intend to deballast in United States waters, your vessel must have a treatment system that is type approved by the U.S. Coast Guard as of its scheduled compliance date, or perform ballast water exchange.