



Prepare for low sulphur fuel operation in the Mediterranean Sea

Having been adopted by the IMO, the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for sulphur oxides and particulate matter is set to come into effect on 1 May 2025.

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In December 2022, at the 79th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee ([MEPC 79](#)), amendments to MARPOL Annex VI were adopted to establish a Mediterranean Emission Control Area (ECA) for sulphur oxides and particulate matter. The amendments will enter into force on 1 May 2024, but the requirements will take effect after a 12-month grace period as per Regulation 14.7 of MARPOL Annex VI.

Hence, from 1 May 2025, ships operating in the entire Mediterranean Sea will be required to burn fuel oil with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.10% m/m or use alternative solutions for compliance such as exhaust gas cleaning systems (scrubbers) or sulphur-free fuels.

While the Mediterranean Sea has become the fifth area worldwide to be designated an ECA under Regulation 14.3 of MARPOL Annex VI, it is worth noting that a number of regions, states and ports around the world continue to implement their own strict sulphur emission limits. A round-up of some of these paces is included in our insight "[Regional sulphur emission limits at a glance](#)".

Ship operators must therefore ensure that crews are familiar with the sulphur emission limits in force, not only in the MARPOL designated ECAs, but in all jurisdictions to which they trade. Crews should also be provided with clear procedures and guidance to this effect. As new local regulations or changes to existing legislation can be implemented with very little notice, and the regulatory enforcement strategy may differ from one region/port to another, ships' masters should always seek advice from their agents on local requirements well in advance of the ship's intended port call.