



India bans single-use plastic onboard ships

Please see our *[Alert of 13 January 2020]* (<https://www.gard.no/insights/new-implementation-strategy-for-india-s-single-use-plastic-ban/>) for the latest position.

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On 16 October 2019, the Indian Directorate General of Shipping issued [Order No.05 of 2019](#), prohibiting the use of single use plastic items onboard ships. The new rule applies to both Indian and foreign flagged ships and prohibits the use onboard of the following items made of plastic whilst in Indian territorial waters:

With immediate effect:

- cutlery, plates and cups;
- bottles up to 10 liters for water and other drinks;
- garbage and shopping bags; and
- dispensing containers for cleaning fluids that are less than 10 liters in volume.

With effect from 1 January 2020:

- bags, trays, containers, food packaging film;
- milk bottles, freezer bags, shampoo bottles, ice cream containers;
- bottles for water and other drinks, dispensing containers for cleaning fluids, biscuit trays;
- hot drink cups, insulated food packaging, protective packaging for fragile items; and
- microwave dishes, ice cream tubs, potato chip bags, bottle caps.

The new rule prohibits *the carriage* of any such items onboard Indian flagged ships. Foreign flagged ships are only prohibited from *using* any such item while operating in Indian waters and must keep all their single-use plastic items locked in a store during their stay in Indian ports and during their passage through the territorial waters of India.

Ensuring compliance

In order to document compliance during port state control, foreign flagged ships intending to enter Indian ports are required to make a log entry identifying:

- the single use plastic items available onboard the ship;
- where the items are stored while the ship operates in Indian waters; and
- when (time, latitude and longitude) the items were placed in the store prior to entering Indian territorial waters.

It is also important to note that, India will no longer permit single use plastic items to be discharged to its port reception facilities. Ships trading frequently to Indian ports may therefore have to adjust their garbage management plan accordingly in order to facilitate discharge of single use plastic items elsewhere. Remember – under MARPOL Annex V, all plastic waste generated during the normal operation of the ship is strictly banned from discharge in any waters!

Avoiding single-use plastic

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According to a recent report by the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology (IMarEST), “ [Steering towards an industry level response to marine plastic pollution](#) ”, a lack of solid evidence on the origins of marine litter makes it hard to apportion responsibility with certainty. However, even if the marine industry is not a major source of plastic waste, it must still align its efforts with those of other industries to ensure its relative share from marine-based activities and ports does not grow.

[Guidelines adopted by IMO](#) recommend that “ *all shipowners and operators should minimize taking on board material that could become garbage* ”. Specifically, the guidelines recommend that shipowners and operators, where possible with the ship's suppliers, should consider the products being procured in terms of the garbage they will generate. Options include:

- using supplies that come in bulk packaging, taking into account factors such as adequate shelf-life (once a container is opened) to avoid increasing garbage associated with such products;
- using supplies that come in reusable or recyclable packaging and containers;
- avoiding the use of disposable cups, utensils, dishes, towels and rags and other convenience items whenever possible; and
- avoiding supplies that are packaged in plastic, unless reusable or recyclable plastic is used.

The problem of plastics in the ocean is global and growing. Change requires action from everyone, everywhere - on land and on sea. Further information is also available in our publications “ [Plastic in the Ocean – Why we should all be concerned](#) ” and “ [MARPOL Annex V – the international convention banning the discharge of plastic and garbage from ships](#) ”.

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