

# Canadian Environmental Protection Act and disposal at sea

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## Disposal at sea

Each year in Canada, 2 to 3 million tonnes of material are disposed of at sea. Most of this is dredged material must be moved to keep shipping channels and harbours clear for navigation and commerce. Only the substances listed in Schedule 5 the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) may be considered for disposal at sea as follows:

1. dredged material
2. fish waste and other organic matter resulting from industrial fish processing operations
3. ships, aircraft, platforms or other structures
4. inert, inorganic geological matter
5. uncontaminated organic matter of natural origin
6. bulky substances that are primarily composed of iron, steel, concrete, or other similar material

Discharges from land (except land based discharges of dredged material) or from normal ship operations (such as bilge water) are not considered disposal at sea but are subject to other controls.

## Controlling disposal at sea

All disposal at sea is controlled federally by a system of permits issued under CEPA. The permit system allows Canada to meet its international obligations under the Convention on the prevention of marine pollution by dumping of wastes and other matter, 1972 and the related 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the prevention of marine pollution by dumping of wastes and other matter, 1972.

Permits are granted on a case-by-case basis after a detailed application and assessment process. Schedule 6 of CEPA outlines the process to be used to assess permit applications. Permits typically govern timing, handling, storing, loading, release at the disposal site, and monitoring requirements. The permit assessment phase involves public notice, an application that provides detailed data, a scientific review, and the payment of fees.

Disposal at sea is permitted only where it is the environmentally preferable and practical alternative. Permits are not granted if practical opportunities are available to reuse or recycle the material.

There is a 90 day service standard to complete the assessment of an application (45 days for renewals), which starts after an applicant receives written notification their application is complete.

## **After a permit is issued**

After a permit is issued, periodic inspections will be conducted during disposal operations to ensure compliance with permit conditions. When disposal operations are complete, monitoring studies are conducted annually at selected sites to verify that permit conditions were met and that scientific assumptions made during the permit assessment process were correct and sufficient to protect the marine environment and human health. The monitoring results are considered in future permit assessments.

## **Public information about disposal at sea**

Public concern and potential conflicts with other legitimate uses of the sea are an important part of any permit application assessment. Applicants seeking a permit for disposal at sea must publish a notice in a local newspaper, and anyone with concerns may contact the disposal at sea program during the application assessment.

All permit and monitoring activities are part of the public record and are summarized each year in annual reports. Details of individual permits are also available on the Internet through the [Canadian Environmental Protection Act Registry](#).

Before a disposal operation may begin, a permit must be published in the CEPA Registry for at least 7 days before the effective date of the permit. This allows anyone with a concern to file a notice of objection. Details of individual permits are also available on the CEPA Registry.

## **Further information**

### **Internet**

View the [disposal at sea program](#) for more information.

**Marine Programs**

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