



Scrubber wash water discharge restrictions

As shared stewards of the waters and lands that make up the Port of Vancouver, we are committed to working together with our industry partners to protect our environment while keeping our economy moving.

Planned restrictions

Effective March 1, 2022, the port authority is banning the discharge of scrubber wash water from vessels at berth or at anchorage within our jurisdiction.

For ships that use scrubbers, compliance can be achieved by holding wash water on board, switching to low-sulphur fuel, or by connecting to shore power, which is available at our Canada Place, Deltaport, and Centerm terminals.

Further restrictions will be implemented in the future; however, the timing and implementation of these measures will be determined following further engagement with our partners on the environmental impacts and safety considerations related to scrubber use.

Environmental impacts of scrubber wash water

Scrubber wash water is the byproduct of ship exhaust gas cleaning systems, commonly known as “scrubbers,” which use seawater or freshwater to remove sulphur and other contaminants produced from the exhaust when burning heavy fuel oil.

When released into the marine environment, scrubber wash water can have toxic impacts on marine life due to the presence of pollutants such as metals, hydrocarbons, and sulfurous and nitrous acids, which can accumulate in the food web and negatively impact the health of marine ecosystems.

To better understand the environmental impacts of scrubber wash water discharge at the Port of Vancouver, in 2019, we commissioned a study in Burrard Inlet, which showed that scrubber wash water discharge could result in concentrations of metals that exceed thresholds set for the protection of aquatic life.

Future measures and opportunities for collaboration

This initial restriction on scrubber wash water discharge at berth or at anchorage in the Port of Vancouver is the first phase of a three-phased approach to scrubber restrictions. Following further engagement with our industry partners, government stakeholders, and Indigenous groups, the port authority will implement a second phase of restrictions that prohibit scrubber wash water discharge in all waters within the port authority’s jurisdiction.

The third phase of restrictions will be a full prohibition on the use of scrubber systems within the port authority’s jurisdiction. Before this third phase is implemented, the port authority wishes to better understand the impacts of scrubber technology on air quality and human health and would like to collaborate with industry on future research.

Restriction area

Restrictions on scrubber wash water discharge will apply to ships that are at berth or anchored within the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority’s jurisdiction, which includes Burrard Inlet, English Bay, and the Fraser River.



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For more information on the planned restrictions on scrubber wash water discharge or to express your interest in future research collaborations, please email environmentalprograms@portvancouver.com.