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Disposals of garbage and sewage at Bohai, China

An IG Club's correspondent has recently reported a notable increase in the number of vessels fined by China's Maritime Safety Administration (MSA) for violating the Chinese pollution regulations pertaining to discharges of garbage and sewage in the Bohai Sea, China. The local MSA appears to have increased their efforts to monitor potential violators and, depending on the extent of the violations, penalties ranging from RMB 20,000 to RMB 200,000 have been imposed. According to the correspondent, some vessels have been fined for illegal dumping of garbage and sewage, others for failure to maintain proper records.

In order to avoid being fined, we would like to draw your attention to the following points:

1. The Chinese Government has declared the Bohai Sea to be Chinese inland waters. The baseline for China's territorial sea is marked by a line extending across the Bohai Strait, from south of the Liaodong Peninsula to Penglai to the north of the Shandong Peninsula, via the Miaodao Archipelago.
2. The Chinese pollution regulations are broadly in line with MARPOL when it comes to acceptance criteria for discharges of garbage (Annex V) and sewage (Annex IV). For example, MARPOL Annex V provides for food waste to be discharged at least 3 nm from the territorial sea baseline, must be undertaken in accordance with the declared territorial sea limits.
3. All discharges of garbage within the Bohai Sea are prohibited and sewage can only be discharged when the ship uses an approved (IMO) sewage treatment plant. However, based on the worsening sea pollution in the area, and local authorities' increased focus on identifying potential polluters, discharges of treated sewage should, as far as practicably possible, be avoided while operating in the Bohai Sea. According to the correspondent, all major ports in the Bohai Sea provide adequate reception facilities for garbage and sewage and this should, therefore, not cause any delay to vessels.

Shipowners operating in China should ensure that vessels calling ports in the Bohai Sea are familiar with the declared Chinese territorial sea limits and have proper procedures onboard for discharging garbage and sewage in accordance with MARPOL and the Chinese pollution regulations in force. It is also important that the crew accurately record all disposals of pollutants in the relevant record book(s).

Source of Information: Andrew Liu & Co., Ltd www.andrewliu.com.hk