

Recommendations for coastal closure as a result of pollution due to liquid cargo residues

Updated BfR Information Nr. 004/2011, 21 January 2011*

Oils or chemical products that have been washed up on to coasts and beaches not only cause pollution but may also pose a health risk. Tar lumps or oil slick are often the result of illegally released machine oils, illegally discharged cargo residues from oil tankers or rinsed cargo residues from other tankers. Larger amounts may be released into the ocean as a result of accidents. Some substances can be carcinogenic, cause skin corrosion and can be hazardous for pregnant women if not washed off immediately. Due to these risks, the United Nations have compiled recommendations for the closure of coastal sections in case of pollution due to liquid cargo residues after maritime accidents or illegal discharge. This provides states with an instrument which allows them to rapidly initiate appropriate measures in order to protect the population.

The recommendations were drawn up by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), which includes representatives from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR).

For this purpose, the health hazards of about 800 chemicals were assessed on the basis of scientific literature and manufacturers' testing. Documentation, often confidential, available to the International Maritime Organization regarding bulk liquids transported in chemical tankers was used. In addition to poisoning potential and acute toxicity, the long-term adverse health risks of these substances including their carcinogenic and mutagenic characteristics as well as toxicity to reproduction (chronic toxicity) were taken into account. The current list includes the most important bulk liquids that are transported in chemical tankers and NLS (noxious liquid substance) tankers. The health risks of these substances are subdivided into four rating categories in order to enable appropriate measures:

Rating 0 – None

Rating 1 – Warning issued but no closure of amenities

Rating 2 – Warning issued and possible closure of amenities

Rating 3 – Warning issued leading to the closure of amenities

In the following Information, BfR provides the list of substances and recommendations of GESAMP.

The full version of this BfR Information is available in German on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/252/empfehlungen_zur_sperrung_von_kuesten_nach_der_anschaffung_von_fluessigen_ladungsresten.pdf

* The updated version of the Opinion replaces Opinion Nr. 013/2007 of 15 January 2007.