

EPA Vessel General Permit (VGP)

The EPA has released a draft VGP that, once finalized, will replace the current VGP, which was issued in December 2008 and expires on December 19, 2013. EPA is also proposing a draft NPDES Small Vessel General Permit (sVGP) to authorize discharges incidental to the normal operation of non-military and non-recreational vessels less than 79 feet in length. EPA is proposing the VGP to authorize discharges from vessels less than 79 feet in length, because the P.L. 110–299 moratorium (subsequently extended by P.L. 111–215) expires on December 18, 2013. These laws generally provide that no NPDES permits shall be required for incidental discharges (except discharges of ballast water) from vessels less than 79 feet and commercial fishing vessels.

The EPA issued the currently active VGP on December 18, 2008 to regulate discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel under the Clean Water Act (CWA), which prohibits the discharge of any pollutant to waters of the United States from any point source without a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The permit became effective on December 19, 2008.

The VGP applies to discharges incidental to the normal operation of all non-recreational vessels of 79 feet or greater in length. In addition, the ballast water discharge provisions also apply to any non-recreational vessel of less than 79 feet or commercial fishing vessel of any size discharging ballast water.

The EPA has posted electronic copies of the VGP and other related information, including VGP Fact Sheets, on the EPA's NPDES – Vessel Discharges webpage at www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels.

The US Coast Guard issued a news release stating that it and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) entered into a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) outlining steps the two agencies will take to better coordinate efforts to ensure compliance with the Vessel General Permit (VGP) provisions of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

To provide guidance to assist Coast Guard personnel to evaluate compliance with the provisions of the EPA's VGP, for U.S. and foreign-flagged vessels subject to the VGP and operating in the waters of the United States, as defined by 40 CFR 122.2, [CG-543 Policy letter 11-01](#) is posted here.

Interested parties may suggest improvements to this policy by writing to CG543@uscg.mil.