

Maintaining the safety and security of commercial marine traffic at Port Metro Vancouver

Port Metro Vancouver, as a federal port authority, has navigational jurisdiction for over 16,000 hectares of water in and around Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River. Its role is to facilitate Canada's growing trade while protecting the environment, a responsibility that spans a vast array of activities and regulations for commercial and recreational marine activities.

Port Metro Vancouver's Operations Centre monitors and tracks marine objects within its navigational jurisdiction to prevent and mitigate environmental risks and eliminate hazards to navigational safety.

Recently, the port authority added two new state-of-the-art patrol vessels to its fleet and updated the [Port Information Guide](#) – its "how-to" manual for commercial shippers, boaters and others using the port.

While Transport Canada enforces many of the regulations around shipping, Port Metro Vancouver also plays a role. Every vessel entering the port may be subject to a visit from a port authority harbour patrol officer. Port Metro Vancouver has five patrol boats that serve the Vancouver harbour, Roberts Bank and the Fraser River.

During a visit on board, the officer may issue orders to accomplish certain tasks and see certain documents related to over-side discharge valves, bunkering, and compliance with the practices and procedures in the Port Information Guide.

When it comes to recreational boating, Port Metro Vancouver's harbour patrol officers, together with agency partners, conduct routine vessel inspections. Police may issue tickets to vessel operators who don't comply with safe boating practices in and around commercial shipping areas, such as:

- **Keep clear of deep-sea vessels** Do not impede navigation of deep-sea vessels. Stay well clear of all major deep-sea channels. Do not approach any terminal or deep-sea vessel alongside a berth or at anchor; keep back at least 50 metres.
- **Move at a safe speed** Reduce speed when passing other vessels. Speed cannot exceed five knots within Bedwell Bay, Belcarra Bay, Deep Cove, Strathcona Park, and Coal Harbour.
- **Communicate plans** When transiting through narrows and under bridges, exchange plans and/or signal to other vessels in the area. Never cross in front of a vessel; always pass behind.
- **Listen to radio channels** Monitor VHF 16 (all areas), VHF 12 (Vancouver harbour) and VHF 74 (Fraser River) radio stations for information and warnings.
- **Avoid collision** All vessels are to comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea 1972 (Colregs). Stay on course. Display the correct navigation lights or shapes at all times.
- **Carry the right gear** All vessels are to follow fire protection and prevention measures for the safety of all operating in the port.
- **Fuel at designated stations** Abide by posted safety procedures when refueling.

- **Discharge correctly** Abide by vessel pollution and dangerous chemical regulations. No discharges within three nautical miles of shore. Utilize pump stations or disposal services for grey and black water.
- **Anchor only with permission** Anchorages in Burrard Inlet are for deep-sea vessels only. Anchoring of pleasure crafts is prohibited, unless in an emergency and then only with approval from the port authority.
- **Report incidents** Contact Port Metro Vancouver's 24/7 Operations Centre at 604.665.9086. Report marine distress emergencies on VHF 16 station, by dialing *16 on cellular, or contact 911.

Transport Canada enforces rules regarding the release of ballast water. Ballast water is considered to be biotic, which means it contains living organisms. It is carried in separate tanks or empty cargo tanks. Ships take on ballast water to weigh the ship down when it is not full of cargo so it can operate properly. Did you know, Port Metro Vancouver was the first port in North America to prohibit in-port ballast water exchange without prior mid-ocean exchange, to prevent the transfer of invasive species. This practice became the basis of government requirements now enforced by Transport Canada and adopted by many other countries.

The port authority is responsible for keeping waters in its jurisdiction free for navigation and addressing any environmental concerns. A common concern is derelict vessels. Port Metro Vancouver's Operations Centre often receives reports of derelict vessels, such as partially sunken ships, spotted somewhere in local waters.

Dealing with derelict vessels is challenging and potentially very costly, depending on the circumstances and location.

Vessel owners are responsible for removing derelict vessels, including the associated costs. However, under the *Canada Marine Act*, Port Metro Vancouver may take action to remove derelict vessels if there is any navigational and/or environmental safety risk.

Port Metro Vancouver assesses derelict vessels in its waters, monitors their condition, and collaborates with agencies to contact the vessel owners. As a port authority, Port Metro Vancouver has invested significant resources to prevent and mitigate risks associated with derelict vessels.

In 2013, Port Metro Vancouver began the Fraser River Improvement Initiative, a five-year program to remove derelict vessels and structures identified as environmental or safety hazards where the owner was unknown or a property had been trespassed. The program is intended to increase awareness and understanding of issues posed by problem sites and derelict vessels. A total of 151 sites have been identified as needing clean up, and over 100 have been addressed so far.

Port Metro Vancouver is also responsible for dredging port waters. Removing sediment from a riverbed to maintain its depth is critical to supporting Canada's trade objectives and keeps our waterways open. The port authority dredges to provide unimpeded vessel access to terminals and port facilities to ensure trade is conducted safely.

Dredging requirements differ depending on location. For instance, Burrard Inlet is a deep-water port, but certain projects may require one-time dredging, referred to as capital dredging. On the other hand, the Fraser River requires annual dredging because of the continuous run-off of the river and the silt that is deposited as it nears the sea.

As Port Metro Vancouver is mandated to facilitate the movement of goods in support of Canada's trading priorities, it should come as no surprise that the movement of oil tankers gets particular attention. Crude oil tankers have safely navigated the harbour for more than 60 years. All tankers calling on Vancouver have double hulls, with two layers of heavy steel protecting their cargo, and are approved for use by reviewing their operating history and current condition. Transport Canada [Port State Control](#) monitors every vessel that comes into Canadian waters and can access vessel information including its history and known deficiencies. Further, each petroleum terminal typically conducts their own stringent inspections on all tankers calling their terminal.

Although Port Metro Vancouver is not a first responder in spill response, the port authority will provide operational assistance. The *Canada Shipping Act (2001)* is Transport Canada's regulatory framework surrounding marine pollution and its enforcement. In the case of a report of pollution in the water, including oil or fuel spills, Canada operates under the National Spill Response Protocol, which specifies that the Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for all spill response and recovery. In Vancouver, recovery operations are provided by Western Canada Marine Response Corporation. Port Metro Vancouver can be called upon by the Coast Guard to conduct an initial inspection in response to a pollution report in our jurisdiction.

For more information, consult the Port Information Guide. It's a comprehensive document that can further explain the policies and procedures related to what Port Metro Vancouver does every day.