



Merchant Shipping Act 1995

1995 CHAPTER 21

PART VI **U.K.**

PREVENTION OF POLLUTION

CHAPTER II **U.K.**

OIL POLLUTION

General provisions for preventing pollution

131 Discharge of oil from ships into certain United Kingdom waters. **U.K.**

[^{F1}(A1) In this section “relevant discharge” means—

- (a) a discharge of oil or a mixture containing oil which is made—
 - (i) from a ship which is an offshore installation, and
 - (ii) into United Kingdom national waters which are navigable by sea-going ships, or
- (b) a discharge of oil or a mixture containing oil which is made—
 - (i) from a ship which is not an offshore installation, and
 - (ii) into United Kingdom national waters which are navigable by sea-going ships but which do not form part of the sea.]

(1) [^{F2}If there is a relevant discharge], subject to the following provisions of this Chapter, the following shall be guilty of an offence, that is to say—

- (a) ^{F3}...the owner or master of the ship, unless he proves that the discharge took place and was caused as mentioned in paragraph (b) below;
- (b) if the discharge [^{F4}from the ship] takes place in the course of a transfer of oil to or from another ship or a place on land and is caused by the act or omission of any person in charge of any apparatus in that other ship or that place, the owner or master of that other ship or, as the case may be, the occupier of that place.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/07/2009.

Changes to legislation: Merchant Shipping Act 1995, Cross Heading: General provisions for preventing pollution is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 15 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) Subsection (1) above does not apply to any discharge [^{F5}from an offshore installation] which—
- (a) is made into the sea; and
 - (b) is of a kind or is made in circumstances for the time being prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—
- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding [^{F6}£250,000];
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine.
- [^{F7}(3A) In this section “offshore installation” means any mobile or fixed drilling or production platform or any other platform used in connection with the exploration, exploitation or associated offshore processing of sea bed mineral resources.]
- (4) In this section “sea” includes any estuary or arm of the sea.
- (5) In this section “place on land” includes anything resting on the bed or shore of the sea, or of any other waters included in United Kingdom national waters, and also includes anything afloat (other than a ship) if it is anchored or attached to the bed or shore of the sea or any such waters.
- (6) In this section “occupier”, in relation to any such thing as is mentioned in subsection (5) above, if it has no occupier, means the owner thereof.

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 131(A1) inserted (1.7.2009) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(2)** (with reg. 6)
- F2** Words in s. 131(1) substituted (1.7.2009) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(3)(a)** (with reg. 6)
- F3** Words in s. 131(1)(a) omitted (1.7.2009) by virtue of [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(3)(b)** (with reg. 6)
- F4** Words in s. 131(1)(b) substituted (1.7.2009) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(3)(c)** (with reg. 6)
- F5** Words in s. 131(2) inserted (1.7.2009) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(4)** (with reg. 6)
- F6** Sum in s. 131(3)(a) substituted (17.7.1997) by 1997 c. 28, s. **7(1)(2)** (with s. 7(5)); S.I. 1997/1539, art. 2, **Sch.**
- F7** S. 131(3A) inserted (1.7.2009) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **3(5)** (with reg. 6)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 131(3) applied (28.2.1996) by S.I. 1996/282, **art. 3**
 S. 131(3) applied (1.7.1998) by S.I. 1998/1377, **reg. 14(2)**
- C2** S. 131(3) applied (with modifications) (12.12.2006) by [The Merchant Shipping \(Prevention of Pollution by Sewage and Garbage\) Order 2006 \(S.I. 2006/2950\)](#), arts. 1, **6**
- C3** S. 131(3) applied (1.7.2009) by S.I. 1996/3010, **reg. 14(1ZA)** (as inserted by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **5(a)**)
- C4** S. 131(3) applied (1.7.2009) by S.I. 1996/2154, **reg. 36A(1)(2)** (as inserted by [The Merchant Shipping \(Implementation of Ship-Source Pollution Directive\) Regulations 2009 \(S.I. 2009/1210\)](#), regs. 1, **4(13)**)

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132 Defences of owner or master charged with offence under section 131. U.K.

- (1) Where a person is charged with an offence under section 131 as the owner or master of a ship, it shall be a defence to prove that the oil or mixture was discharged for the purpose of—
 - (a) securing the safety of any ship;
 - (b) preventing damage to any ship or cargo, or
 - (c) saving life,unless the court is satisfied that the discharge of the oil or mixture was not necessary for that purpose or was not a reasonable step to take in the circumstances.
- (2) Where a person is charged with an offence under section 131 as the owner or master of a ship, it shall also be a defence to prove—
 - (a) that the oil or mixture escaped in consequence of damage to the ship, and that as soon as practicable after the damage occurred all reasonable steps were taken for preventing, or (if it could not be prevented) for stopping or reducing, the escape of the oil or mixture; or
 - (b) that the oil or mixture escaped by reason of leakage, that neither the leakage nor any delay in discovering it was due to any want of reasonable care, and that as soon as practicable after the escape was discovered all reasonable steps were taken for stopping or reducing it.

133 Defences of occupier charged with offence under section 131 U.K.

Where a person is charged, in respect of the escape of any oil or mixture containing oil, with an offence under section 131 as the occupier of a place on land, it shall be a defence to prove that neither the escape nor any delay in discovering it was due to any want of reasonable care and that as soon as practicable after it was discovered all reasonable steps were taken for stopping or reducing it.

134 Protection for acts done in exercise of certain powers of harbour authorities, etc. U.K.

- (1) Where any oil, or mixture containing oil, is discharged in consequence of—
 - (a) the exercise of any power conferred by section 252 or 253; or
 - (b) the exercise, for the purpose of preventing obstruction or danger to navigation, of any power to dispose of sunk, stranded or abandoned ships which is exercisable by a harbour authority under any local enactment;and apart from this subsection the authority exercising the power, or a person employed by or acting on behalf of the authority, would be guilty of an offence under section 131 in respect of that discharge, the authority or person shall not be convicted unless it is shown that they or he failed to take such steps (if any) as were reasonable in the circumstances for preventing, stopping or reducing the discharge.
- (2) Subsection (1) above shall apply to the exercise of any power conferred by section 13 of the ^{MI}Dockyard Ports Regulation Act 1865 (removal of obstructions to dockyard ports) as it applies to the exercise of the powers under sections 252 and 253, and shall, as so applying, have effect as if references to the authority exercising the power were references to the Queen's harbour master for the port in question.

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Marginal Citations

M1 1865 c. 125.

135 Restrictions on transfer of oil at night. **U.K.**

- (1) No oil shall be transferred between sunset and sunrise to or from a ship in any harbour in the United Kingdom unless the requisite notice has been given in accordance with this section or the transfer is for the purposes of a [^{F8} [^{F9} [^{F10} fire brigade] [^{F10} the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board or other employer of fire-fighters]] [^{F9} relevant authority (as defined in section 6 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (asp 5)) or any other employer of fire-fighters]] [^{F8} fire and rescue authority or other employer of fire-fighters] .
- (2) A general notice may be given to the harbour master of a harbour that transfers of oil between sunset and sunrise will be frequently carried out at a place in the harbour within such period, not ending later than twelve months after the date on which the notice is given, as is specified in the notice; and if such a notice is given it shall be the requisite notice for the purposes of this section as regards transfers of oil at that place within the period specified in the notice.
- (3) Subject to subsection (2) above, the requisite notice for the purposes of this section shall be a notice given to the harbour master not less than three hours nor more than 96 hours before the transfer of oil begins.
- (4) In the case of a harbour which has no harbour master, references in this section to the harbour master shall be construed as references to the harbour authority.
- (5) If any oil is transferred to or from a ship in contravention of this section, the master of the ship, and, if the oil is transferred from or to a place on land, the occupier of that place, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

Textual Amendments

- F8** Words in s. 135(1) substituted (E.W.) (1.10.2004 except in relation to W., 10.11.2004 for W.) by [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 \(c. 21\)](#), s. 61, [Sch. 1 para. 87](#); [S.I. 2004/2304](#), art. 2; [S.I. 2004/2917](#), art. 2
- F9** Words in s. 135(1) substituted (S.) (2.8.2005) by [Fire \(Scotland\) Act 2005 \(asp 5\)](#), s. 90, [sch. 3 para. 18](#) (with s. 77); [S.S.I. 2005/392](#), art. 2(k)
- F10** Words in s. 135(1) substituted (N.I.) (1.7.2006) by [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2006 \(S.I. 2006/1254\)](#), art. 1(3), [Sch. 3 para. 21](#); [S.R. 2006/257](#), art. 2(d)

136 Duty to report discharge of oil into waters of harbours. **U.K.**

- (1) If any oil or mixture containing oil—
 - (a) is discharged from a ship into the waters of a harbour in the United Kingdom; or
 - (b) is found to be escaping or to have escaped from a ship into any such waters;
 the owner or master of the ship shall forthwith report the occurrence to the harbour master, or, if the harbour has no harbour master, to the harbour authority.

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- (2) A report made under subsection (1) above shall state whether the occurrence falls within subsection (1)(a) or (b) above.
- (3) If a person fails to make a report as required by this section he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

[^{F11}**136A Discharges etc. authorised under other enactments.** **U.K.**]

The provisions of sections 131(1) and 136(1) shall not apply to any discharge which is made under, and the provisions of section 136(1) shall not apply to any escape which is authorised by, an authorisation granted under Part I of the ^{M2}Environmental Protection Act 1990 or a permit granted under regulations under section 2 of the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 [^{F12}or an authorisation or permit granted under any corresponding provisions of the law of Northern Ireland].]

Textual Amendments

F11 S. 136A inserted ((21.3.2000) (E.W.) and otherwise *prosp.*) by 1999 c. 24, ss. 6(1), 7(3), **Sch. 2 para. 13**; S.I. 2000/800, **art. 2**

F12 Words in s. 136A added (N.I.) (18.1.2003) by S.I. 2002/3153, **art. 53(1)**, **Sch. 5 para. 4**

Marginal Citations

M2 1990 c. 43.

Status:

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