

# OP NOTICE TO SHIPPING No. N-4-2024



Illegal Activities  
on Transiting  
Vessels

January 1, 2024

## **OP NOTICE TO SHIPPING No. N-4-2024**

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To: Shipping Agents, Owners and Operators

Subject: Illegal Activities on Transiting Vessels

1. This Notice is effective on the date of issue and cancels OP Notice to Shipping No. N-4-2023. A revised Notice will be issued in January of each year or when otherwise required.
2. The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) is aware that over the years there have been reports of drug and merchandise peddling, and pilferage of cargo on board vessels in the maritime industry. This is a matter of serious concern, and the Authority is doing everything possible to curb these activities in the Canal. In addition, the Authority requires that employees comply with the *Ethics and Conduct Regulations of the Panama Canal Authority*, which establishes that, with minor exceptions, they will not accept gifts from persons doing business with the Authority. This is particularly important in cases in which determining the legitimacy of said gifts is difficult. The cooperation and support of officers and crew of transiting vessels is essential to succeed in these efforts.
3. The most effective shipboard measures are:
  - a. To refrain from presenting gifts to Canal employees;
  - b. To control access to living, office, shop, storage and cargo spaces; and,
  - c. To report any incident immediately and identify violators.
4. The following procedures are recommended for implementation by shipboard personnel:
  - a. Canal employees should be escorted by vessel personnel to and from their duty stations.
  - b. Canal employees should be assigned toilet facilities and scuttlebutts as close as possible to their duty station.
  - c. If the master suspects any illegal activity by Authority personnel, he or an officer representative should immediately notify Maritime Traffic Control Unit through the pilot, if

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aboard, to request an investigation and, if deemed necessary, should conduct a search before the employee(s) disembark.

d. Shipboard searches must be ordered by the master or a ship's officer and should be conducted with appropriate witnesses, including the Canal pilot or other responsible Authority personnel, if possible.

5. When a Canal employee is caught in an unauthorized area, or has unauthorized items in his possession, Maritime Traffic Control Unit should be notified immediately through the pilot, if aboard. If the employee is a line handler, then the line handler leader should also be notified. A positive identification of the offender is essential, as is a concise report of the incident, including statements by all witnesses, and a positive identification of the merchandise or item involved. Reported incidents will be investigated in detail by the Authority. This will enable the Authority to take appropriate disciplinary and corrective actions when warranted.

6. As a matter of general information, line handlers are authorized to carry on board only job-related items such as flashlights, raincoats, gloves and their lunch. All other items must be specifically authorized by the supervisor. Line handlers have been specifically advised that their belongings are subject to search when boarding or disembarking a vessel and unauthorized items are subject to confiscation; however, all Canal employees are subject to the same. The Authority conducts random searches at launch landings and a similar practice is conducted on board vessels. These searches, along with confiscation of stolen or otherwise unauthorized property, serve to deter potential offenders.

7. Ship personnel shall refrain from presenting Canal employees with gifts of any kind, since determining their legitimacy is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain, and is disruptive to Authority efforts to control this problem.

## **ORIGINAL SIGNED**

Boris Moreno Vasquez  
Vice President for Operations