



**CANAL DE PANAMÁ**

**Frequently asked questions**  
**Fuels and Scrubbers for**  
**Panama Canal waters**

**1. Is it required to declare fuel information for ships only intending to do local calls?**

Fuel information is required for all ships that arrive into Panama Canal waters which include the seaside anchorage areas at the Pacific and Atlantic entrances. This will allow verifying compliance with Panama Canal regulations and IMO 2020 sulfur cap limit. Be mindful that the Panama Canal restricts the viscosity of the residual fuel for transiting vessels to a maximum of 70 cSt.

**2. What is the maximum sulphur limit allowed at the Panama Canal?**

Ships without scrubbers will only be allowed to use fuel with maximum sulfur content of 0.5%. Ships with scrubbers may use the maximum fuel concentration allowed by their scrubbers' design, but not more than 3.5%.

**3. When must the main engine be changed over to marine distillate fuel?**

Vessels arriving with non-compliant residual fuel for transit must complete changeover of their main engine to marine distillate fuel according to the following: A) Southbound vessels, at least eight nautical miles from the Breakwater on the Atlantic Side, and B) Northbound vessels, at least three nautical miles from the Sea Buoy at the Pacific Entrance.

**4. When can ships change over back to residual fuel?**

Changeover back to residual fuel having viscosity higher than 70 cSt must be according to the following: A) Vessels proceeding to port terminals or anchorages within Canal waters immediately after completing their transit will be permitted to switch back to residual fuel, once the vessel is moored alongside the dock or is anchored. B) All other vessels shall change over after departing Panama Canal waters.

**5. Is the use of Open Loop Scrubbers allowed in Panama Canal waters?**

The use of Open Loop Scrubbers or Hybrid Scrubbers in Open Loop Mode is **prohibited** in Panama Canal waters. Panama Canal Waters include the seaside anchorage areas, access channels, the Gaillard Cut, Miraflores Lake, and Gatun Lake.

**6. What if a vessel arrives burning non-compliant fuel?**

Vessels that arrive to Panama Canal waters burning non-compliant fuel will be required to return back to sea to changeover to a suitable fuel. Once the vessel departs Canal waters, it loses its slot in the cue. In other words, arriving with unsuitable fuel may result in delays, fines, and forfeited reservation fees.

**7. Can exceptions be made to the 70 cSt maximum viscosity limit?**

There are no exceptions to this rule. Vessels intending to transit must demonstrate by way of BDN or fuel analysis report that the viscosity of the marine residual fuel complies with the maximum 70 cSt limit.

**8. Are vessels on local calls required to changeover to marine distillate fuel?**

Vessels on local calls (just going to anchorage or a port terminal, but not transiting) are not required to change over to distillate marine fuel. Moreover, these vessels may use residual marine fuels with viscosities greater than 70 cSt.

**9. How can distillate and residual fuels be differentiated.**

Distillate marine fuels end with the letters GO or DO (LSMGO, MGO, LSMDO, MDO, etc.) Also they begin with “D” under the ISO 8217 system. Therefore DMA, DMB, DMX, etc. , are distillate marine fuels. On the other hand, residual marine fuels end with the letters FO (VLSFO, ULSFO, HSFO, IFO, etc.). Similarly, under ISO 8217, they all begin with the letter “R” (RMD, RMG, RMK, etc). The type of fuel is always listed on the Bunker Delivery Note (BDN).

**10. How is methanol classified?**

Methanol, ethanol, and biodiesel should be listed under biofuels when declaring the type of fuel in VUMPA.

**11. What type of fuel should be declared as “Other”?**

The fuel type “Other” must be used for emerging fuels such as hydrogen, and ammonia, among others. Before selecting “Other” in VUMPA, it is recommended that guidance be requested from:

[fuel-compliance@pancanal.com](mailto:fuel-compliance@pancanal.com)