



Merchant Shipping Directorate



Transport Malta

## MARPOL RELATED DEFICIENCIES TO THE 15-PPM BILGE ALARM SYSTEM

### *Merchant Shipping Notice 155*

*Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters,  
Owners' Representatives and Recognised Organisations*

It has been noted that during recent port State control inspections in US ports, whereby MARPOL related deficiencies have been raised to the 15-ppm bilge alarm system, specifically related to entries made in the vessels' Oil Record Books (ORBs) not corresponding to the data being displayed by the 15-ppm bilge alarm/oil content meter.

In accordance with the IMO guidelines contained in [MEPC.107 \(49\)](#), paragraph 4.2.9, the 15 ppm Bilge Alarm should record date, time, alarm status, and operating status of the 15 ppm Bilge Separator. The recording device should also store data for at least eighteen (18) months and should be able to display or print a protocol for official inspections as may be required. In the event of the 15 ppm Bilge Alarm having to be replaced, means should be provided to ensure that the recorded data remains available on board for not less than 18 months.

Upon further investigation the root cause was found to be due to low battery voltage on the 15 ppm bilge alarm system of the Oily Water Separators. The system failed to maintain the required stored data due to low battery voltage. The purpose of the battery is to ensure adequate power to maintain the stored data and to keep the Real Time Clock (RTC) operational. In instances related to low battery voltage (less than the required 2.50 volts), the data shown on the display may become scrambled and/or inaccurate.

The voltage problem was discovered to exist on older models of the 'BilgMon 488' which were fitted with a non-removable battery. Later models are equipped with a replaceable battery that provides an indicator for battery replacement on the display unit, when the voltage drops below a certain value.

Older model identification (letters and numbers) start with "A", "AE", "BFA" & "EDA" whilst newer model identification starts with "4A", "4AE", "4BFA", "4EDA".

Based on the investigations conducted, the [USCG \(Marine Safety Lessons/Alert Learned 01-19\)](#) has issued recommendations to ship-owners/managers and to operators whose vessels have been installed with the BilgMon 488, as follows:

1. To routinely review the stored data available through the LCD display ensuring that the data matches the information recorded in the ORB and actual OWS operations.
2. Maintain awareness that PSC Officers performing MARPOL examinations will verify that the BilgMon 488 is recording data properly and is aligned with the ORB entries.

In order to avoid delays or potential Port State Control penalties owners/managers shall ensure adherence to these recommendations.

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