

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR REMOVAL OF MARINE DEBRIS

These Best Management Practices were developed in consultation with interested state and local agencies to meet the requirements of California Harbors and Navigation Code section 552. Their primary purpose is to limit environmental damage during removal or deconstruction of marine debris authorized under sections 550 and 551 of that statute. These Best Management Practices are not intended to cover all circumstances in removal or deconstruction of marine debris and the public agency removing such debris remains responsible for compliance with all relevant laws and regulations in their removal activities. Inquiries should be made of appropriate agencies concerning required permits, especially when removing vessels that exceed 100 feet in length or more than 100 gross tons.

The following are Best Management Practice guidelines for public agencies removing and processing vessel marine debris while protecting the environment:

1. Prevention of any environmental damage should be the primary concern in removal and deconstruction operations.
2. Prior to deconstruction, marine debris should be evaluated for petroleum products, marine paints, asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other hazardous waste.
3. All known pollutants should be removed prior to deconstruction activities. Pollutants include, but are not limited to petroleum products, batteries, paints, varnishes, solvents, mercury switches, asbestos, electronic wastes, compressed gas cylinders, fire extinguishers, emergency flares, household hazardous wastes, gray water, black water, bilge and ballast waters and tires.
4. If practicable, engines, auxiliary motors, generators, or any other mechanical device with fluid should be removed prior to deconstruction.
5. As waste is generated, it should be classified, managed and disposed of in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. If needed, hazardous waste materials should be tested and appropriate waste profiles generated.
6. Removal activities should be conducted to avoid disturbance of the bottom surface and surrounding area of the removal site and to avoid dredging or filling outside the footprint of the removal area. Work must not substantially impact the bed, channel or bank of the waterway. Dragging of debris should be avoided both in and out of the water, but if conditions require debris removal or processing, appropriate countermeasures should be in place or immediately available.

7. All work should avoid impacts to wildlife, particularly species listed as threatened or protected. Appropriate regulatory agencies should be consulted prior to removal activities to ensure that work will not occur in an environmentally sensitive area or during a prohibited time period and that there will be no significant impacts to species or the environment.
8. The preferred method to process marine debris will be to remove the debris intact by crane, air bags, or other mechanical lifts. After removal it should be placed on a barge or other vessel or on land where appropriate containment countermeasures can be implemented during deconstruction. When transported or offloaded on or over the water, appropriate measures should be in place to prevent release.
9. If the condition of the marine debris will not allow for intact removal, debris may be processed or deconstructed in the water after consultation with the appropriate regulatory agency to determine how to avoid or minimize the possible environmental impacts. The decision to process in place should be based on the integrity of the debris, prior failed attempts to remove it intact, and consideration of such things as location, urgency, or need to remove it as a navigational hazard.
10. A debris boom and an absorbent oil boom with blankets should be deployed at the commencement of work around the debris if fuel, oil or other free-floating pollutants are observed or suspected.
11. Agencies undertaking removal of marine debris should establish a contingency plan to contain unintended or unknown release of pollutants and have a spill kit capable of handling observed or suspected fluids. They should also be able to access additional response equipment and be able to immediately contact spill response agencies or organizations.
12. Should a spill or release occur in the water the party responsible for the spill should immediately notify the appropriate response agency.