



HEAVY FUEL OIL

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What is heavy fuel oil ?

Heavy fuel oil (HFO) is a low-cost fuel, also referred to as bunker or residual fuel. HFO is stickier and more viscous than other ship fuels – it is known as the dirtiest and most polluting fuel used in the shipping industry.

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What are the impacts of heavy fuel oil on the environment and communities?

HFO spills are nearly impossible to clean up and can persist in the marine environment for months. The sticky quality of HFO is especially dangerous for wildlife. It can mat the feathers of birds and the fur of polar bears, leading to hypothermia and even death. HFO spills also impact nearby communities that rely on marine resources for food, culture, and livelihoods.

HFO produces more soot (or black carbon) when burned compared to alternative fuel options. This soot decreases air quality, increases local warming in snow and ice-covered areas, and speeds up the global melting of sea ice. This has serious immediate and long-term consequences for both people and wildlife.

What are Canada's heavy fuel oil regulations in the Arctic?

HFO is banned in some regions of the world due to its harmful effects, including in the Antarctic and areas off the coast of Norway. While elected officials have promised to phase out HFO use in Canada's Arctic, further action has not been taken. Canada is one of the only countries that has yet to support a ban on HFO use throughout the Arctic region. Support for an HFO ban in the Arctic has been expressed by the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Inuvialuit Game Council, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

What needs to be done?

- **Ban HFO use**, starting in the Arctic, and prohibit ships from carrying HFO
- **Continue research** to transition towards alternative fuels
- **Explore policy options** to mitigate the impacts of fuel-switching on the price of goods
- **Build capacity** for oil spill response in the Arctic and other remote communities
- **Improve spill prevention measures** for other fuel types

Why address this now?

The growth in global shipping means HFO impacts are only increasing for ice-dependent wildlife and the communities that rely on them for food, livelihoods and, in some cases, cultural survival. Given the negative consequences of HFO in relation to local warming and sea-ice melting, a transition away from HFO, and other dirty fuels, is especially needed now in the face of our climate crisis.